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THE

GLORIES OF MARY.

TRANSLATED FROM THE ITALIAN OF

ST. ALPHONSUS LIGUORI,

FOUNDER OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE HOLY REDEEMER.

NEW REVISED EDITION.

P. J. KENEDY & SONS
44 BARCLAY STREET, NEW YORK

225

This new and improved translation of "The Glories of Mary," having been duly examined, is hereby approved of.

✠ JOHN,
Archbishop of New York.

New York, Jan. 21st, 1852.

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PREFACE TO THE AMERICAN EDITION.

THE edition of the "Glories of Mary" now presented to the Catholic public of America is the first complete translation of the work ever made into the English language. We trust that it will be found to retain the spirit of the learned and saintly author, and that it will be welcomed by the faithful in this country with the same delight which it has universally called forth in Catholic Europe.

PROTEST OF THE AUTHOR.

In obedience to the decrees of Urban VIII., of holy memory, I protest that I do not intend to attribute any other than purely human authority to all the miracles, revelations, graces, and incidents contained in this book; neither to the titles holy or blessed applied to the servants of God not yet canonized; except in cases where these have been confirmed by the holy Roman Catholic Church, and by the holy Apostolic See, of whom I profess myself an obedient son; and therefore to their judgment I submit myself and whatever I have written in this book.

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PETITION OF THE AUTHOR TO JESUS AND MARY.

My most loving Redeemer and Lord Jesus Christ, I thy poor servant, knowing how pleasing to thee are those who seek to glorify thy most holy mother, whom thou lovest so much, and dost so much desire to see loved and honored by all men, I propose to publish this book of mine which treats of her glories. I know not to whom I could commend it but to thee, who hast so much at heart the glory of this mother. To thee, then, I present and dedicate it. Receive this little offering of my love for thee and thy beloved mother. Take it under thy protection, and pour into the hearts of those who read it the light of confidence in this immaculate Virgin, and the warmth of a burning love for her, in whom thou hast placed the hope and refuge of all the redeemed. And for the reward of this, my poor effort, give me, I pray thee, that love for Mary with which I have desired to inflame, by this my little work, the hearts of all those who read it.

To thee also I appeal, oh my sweetest Lady and mother Mary. Thou knowest that in thee, next to Jesus, I have placed all hope of my eternal salvation, since all the good I have received, my conversion, my vocation to leave the world, and whatever other graces have been given me by God, I acknowledge them all as

coming through thee. Thou knowest that to see thee loved by all as thou dost deserve, and to offer thee some token of gratitude, I have always sought to proclaim thee everywhere, in public and in private, and to inspire all men with a sweet and salutary devotion to thee. I hope to continue to do so for the remainder of my life, even to my last breath. But I see by my advanced age and declining health that the end of my pilgrimage and my entrance into eternity are drawing near ; therefore, I hope to give to the world, before my death, this little book of mine which may continue to proclaim thee for me, and also may excite others to publish thy glories and the great mercy which thou dost exercise towards thy devoted servants. I hope, my most beloved queen, that this my poor offering, although it falls so far short of thy merit, may be pleasing to thy grateful heart, since it is wholly a gift of love. Extend, then, that most kind hand of thine with which thou hast delivered me from the world and from hell, and accept it and protect it as belonging to thee. But I ask this reward for my little offering, that henceforth I may love thee more, and that all into whose hands this work shall fall, may be inflamed with thy love, so that immediately their desire may increase to love thee, and see others love thee also; and that they may engage with all ardor in proclaiming and promoting, as far as possible, thy praise, and confidence in thy most holy intercession. Thus I hope, thus may it be.

TO THE READER.

In order that this little work of mine may not be exposed to censure from very fastidious critics, I have thought it best to place in a clearer light some of the propositions which it contains, and which may seem too bold, or perhaps obscure. I here enumerate some of them, and if others, my dear reader, should come under your eye, I pray you to consider them as meant and spoken by me according to the sense of true and sound theology, and of the holy Roman Catholic Church, whose obedient son I profess myself. In the introduction, page 19, referring to chap. 5th of the book, I have said that God has ordained that all graces should come to us through the hands of Mary. Now this is a very consoling truth for souls tenderly attached to the most holy Mary, and for poor sinners who desire to be converted. Nor should this appear to any one inconsistent with sound theology, since its author, St. Augustine, puts it forth as a general statement, that Mary has shared, by means of her charity, in the spiritual birth of all the members of the Church.*

* Mater quidem spiritu non capitis nostri, quod est ipse salvator, ex quo magis illa spiritualiter nata est; quia omnes, qui in eum crediderint, in quibus et ipsa est, recte filii sponsi appellantur; sed

A well-known author, whom no one will suspect of exaggeration or of fanciful and overheated devotion, adds, that as Jesus Christ really formed his Church on Calvary, it is plain that the holy Virgin really co-operated with him, in a peculiar and excellent manner, in its formation. * And for the same reason it may be said, that if she brought forth Jesus Christ, the head of the Church, without pain, she did not bring forth the body of this head without pain. Hence she commenced on Calvary to be, in a particular manner, mother of the whole Church. To say all in a few words, Almighty God, in order to glorify the mother of the Redeemer, has ordained that her great charity should intercede for all those for whom her divine Son offered and paid the superabundant ransom of his precious blood, in which alone is our *salvation*, *life* and *resurrection*. It is on the basis of this doctrine and whatever belongs to it that I have undertaken to establish my propositions, † which the saints in their affecting colloquies with Mary, and in their fervent discourses concening her, have not hesitated to assert: when an ancient father, quoted by the celebrated Vincenzo Contensone, has written: The fulness of grace was in Christ as the head from which it flows,

plane mater membrorum ejus (quæ nos sumus) quia cooperata est charitate, ut fideles in Ecclesia nascerentur, qui illius capitis membra sunt. Lib. de Sancta Virginitate, cap. 6.

* M. Nicole, Instr. theol. and mor. on the Lord's Prayer, the Angelical Salutation, &c., Instr. 5, c. 2.

† Part 1, c. 6, § 2, c. 7, 8, § 2, c. 9.

but in Mary as the neck through which it is transmitted.* This is plainly taught by the angelic Doctor, St. Thomas, who confirms all the foregoing in these words: The blessed Virgin is called full of grace in three ways . . . . . The third, in reference to its overflowing upon all men. For great is it in each saint if he hath enough of grace for the salvation of many; but this would be the greatest, if he had enough for the salvation of all men; and it is so with Christ and the blessed Virgin, for in every danger we may obtain salvation through the glorious Virgin. Hence, cant. 4, v. 4 *a thousand bucklers*—that is, remedies against dangers—*hang upon her;* "Mille clypei pendent ex ea." Hence in every virtuous work we can have her aid, and, therefore, she herself says, In me is all hope of life and of virtue: "*In me omnis spes vitæ et virtutis.*"†—Eccli. xxiv. 25.

* In Christo fuit plenitudo gratiæ, sicut in capite influente, in Maria vero, sicut in collo transfundente. Theolog. mentis et cordis. Tom. 2, Lib. 10. Dissert. 6, c. 1. Speculat. 2. in Reflexiones.

† Dicitur autem Beata Virgo plena gratiæ, quantum ad tria ... Tertio quo ad refusionem in omnes homines. Magnum enim est in quolibet sancto, quando habet tantum de gratia quod sufficit ad salutem multorum; sed quando haberet tantum, quod sufficeret ad salutem omnium hominum de mundo, hoc esset maximum; et hoc est in Christo et in Beata Virgine. Nam in omni pericuro potes salutem obtinere ab ipsa Virgine gloriosa. Unde cantic. 4. *Mille clypei*, id est remedia contra pericula, *pendent ex ea.* Item in omni opere virtutis potes eam habere in adjutorium; et ideo dicit ipsa Eccli. xxiv. 25.

INTRODUCTION

WHICH OUGHT TO BE READ.

My dear reader and brother in Mary, since the devotion which has urged me to write, and now moves you to read this book, renders us both happy children of this good mother, if you ever should hear any one say that I could have spared this labor, there being so many learned and celebrated books that treat of this subject, answer him, I pray you, in the words of Francone the abbot, which we find in the Library of the Fathers, that the praise of Mary is a fountain so full that the more it extends, the fuller it becomes, and the fuller it becomes the more it extends;* which signifies, that the blessed Virgin is so great and sublime, that the more we praise her, the more there is to praise. So that St. Augustine says: All the tongues of men, even if all their members were changed to tongues, would not be sufficient to praise her as she deserves.†

* Laus Mariæ fons est indeficiens, qui quanto amplius tenditur, tanto amplius impletur; quanto amplius impletur, tanto amplius dilatatur.

† Etiamsi omnium nostrum membra verterentur in linguas eam laudare sufficiret nullus. Ap. B. Dion. Carth.

I know that there are innumerable books, both great and small, which treat of the glories of Mary; but as these are rare or voluminous, and not according to my plan, I have endeavored to collect in a small space, from all the authors at my command, the most select and pithy sentences of the Fathers and theologians, in order to give devout persons an opportunity, with little effort or expense, to inflame their ardor by reading of the love of Mary, and especially, to present materials to priests which may enable them to excite by their sermons devotion to the divine mother.

Worldly lovers are accustomed to mention frequently and to praise the persons beloved, that these may be praised and applauded also by others; then how poor must we suppose the love of those to be who boast of being lovers of Mary, but who seldom remember to speak of her, and inspire the love of her also in others! Not so the true lovers of our most lovely Lady: they would praise her everywhere, and see her loved by all the world; and therefore in public and in private, wherever it is in their power, they endeavor to kindle in the hearts of all, those blessed flames of love with which theirs are burning for their beloved queen.

But that every one may be persuaded of how great benefit it is to himself and the people to promote devotion to Mary, let us hear what the Fathers say of it. St. Bonaventure declares that those who are devoted to publishing the glories

of Mary, are secure of paradise; and Richard of St. Laurence confirms this by saying, that to honor the queen of angels is to acquire life everlasting; * since our most grateful Lady, adds the same author, pledges herself to honor in the other life him who promises to honor her in this; † and is there any one ignorant of the promise made by Mary herself to those who engage in promoting the knowledge and love of her upon the earth? "They that explain me shall have life everlasting," ‡ as the holy Church applies it on the festival of her Immaculate Conception. Exult, exult! oh my soul! said St. Bonaventure, who was so assiduous in proclaiming the praises of Mary, and rejoice in her, because many good things are prepared for those who praise her; and since all the Holy Scriptures, he added, speak in praise of Mary, let us endeavor always with heart and tongue to celebrate this our divine mother, that we may be conducted by her to the kingdom of the blessed.§

We are told in the revelations of St. Bridget, that the blessed Emingo, Bishop, being accustomed to begin his sermons with the praises of Mary, the Virgin herself appeared one day to the saint, and said to her: "Tell that prelate who

* Honorare Mariam est thesaurizare vitam eternam. De Laud. v. c. 2.

†Honorificantes se in hoc sæculo honorificabit in futuro.

‡ Qui elucidant me, vitam eternam habebunt. Eccli. xxiv. 31.

§ Exulta, exulta, anima mea, et lætare in illa; quia multa bona sunt laudatoribus præparata. Si enim omnes scripturæ loquuntur de ea. Deiparam perpetuo corde et lingua celebremus, ut ab ipsa ad gaudia eterna perducamur.

is accustomed to commence his discourses with my praises, that I will be his mother, and that I will present his soul to God, and that he shall die a good death;"* and he indeed died like a saint, in prayer and in celestial peace. Mary appeared before his death to another religious, a Dominican, who was accustomed to terminate his sermons by speaking of her. She defended him from the assaults of the demons, comforted him, and bore away with her his happy soul. †

The devout Thomas à Kempis represents Mary as commending to her Son those who publish her praise, and saying, "Oh, my Son, have compassion on the souls of thy lovers, and of those who speak in my praise.‡

As far as the advantage of the people is concerned, St. Anselm says, that the sacred womb of Mary having been made the way of salvation for sinners, sinners cannot but be converted and saved by discourses in praise of Mary.§ If the assertion is true and incontrovertible, as I believe it to be, and as I shall prove, in the fifth chapter of this book, that all graces are dispensed by the hand of Mary alone, and that all those who are saved, are saved solely by means of this divine mother; it may be said, as a necessary consequence, that the salvation of all depends

* Revel. cap. 14. † Ap. P. Auriem.

‡ Fili miserere animæ amatoris tui et laudatoris mei. Serm. 20, ad Nov.

§ Quomodo fieri potest ut ex memoria laudum ejus salus non proveniat peccatorum, cujus uterus facta est via ad peccatores salvandos ? S. Ans. Lib. 3. de Exc. V. cap. 1.

upon preaching Mary, and confidence in her intercession. We know that St. Bernard of Sienna sanctified Italy; St. Dominic converted many provinces; St. Louis Bertrand, in all his sermons, never failed to exhort his hearers to practise devotion towards Mary; and many others also have done the same.

I find that Father Paul Segneri, the younger, a celebrated missionary, in every mission preached a sermon on devotion to Mary, and this he called his favorite sermon. And we can attest, in all truth, that in our missions, where we have an invariable rule not to omit the sermon on our Lady, no discourse is so profitable to the people, or excites more compunction among them, than that on the mercy of Mary. I say *on the mercy of Mary:* for St. Bernard says, we may praise her humility, and marvel at her virginity; but being poor sinners, we are more pleased and attracted by hearing of her mercy; for to this we more affectionately cling, this we more often remember and invoke.* Therefore in this little book, leaving to other authors the description of the other merits of Mary, I have confined myself especially to treating of her great compassion and her powerful intercession; having collected, as far as possible, with the labor of years, all that the holy Fathers and the most celebrated authors have said of the mercy and power of

* Laudamus humilitatem, miramur virginitatem; sed miseris sapit dulcius misericordia; misericordiam amplectimur carius, recordamur sæpius, crebrius invocamus. Serm. 4, de Ass.

Mary; and because these attributes of the blessed Virgin are wonderfully set forth in the great prayer of the *Salve Regina*, approved by the Church and required by her to be recited the greater part of the year by all the clergy, secular and regular, I have undertaken, in the first place, to explain in separate discourses this most devout prayer. Besides this, I believed it would be acceptable to the servants of Mary, if I added discourses on her principal festivals and upon the virtues of our divine mother, placing at the conclusion of them the practices of devotion most in use among her servants, and approved by the Church.

Devout reader, if this little work of mine pleases you, as I hope it will, I pray you to commend me to the holy Virgin, that I may obtain great confidence in her protection. Ask for me this grace, and I will ask the same for you, whoever you may be, who bestow on me this charity. Oh, blessed is he who clings with love and confidence to those two anchors of salvation, Jesus and Mary! He certainly will not be lost. Let us both say, oh my reader, with the devout Alphonso Rodriguez: Jesus and Mary, my sweet loves, for you I will suffer, for you I will die; may I be wholly yours, may I be in nothing my own.* May we love Jesus and Mary, and become saints, since we can aspire and hope for no greater happiness than this. Farewell, till we

* Jesus et Maria, amores mei dulcissimi, pro vobis patiar, pro vobis moriar; sim totus vester, sim nihil meus. Ap. Auriem Aff. sc.

meet in heaven at the feet of this sweet mother and her dearly beloved Son, to praise them, to thank them, and love them, in their immediate presence through all eternity. Amen.

PRAYER TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN

TO OBTAIN A GOOD DEATH.

Oh Mary, sweet refuge of miserable sinners, at the moment when my soul departs from this world, my sweetest mother, by the grief that thou didst endure when thou wast present at the death of thy Son upon the cross, then assist me with thy mercy. Keep far from me my infernal enemies, and come thyself to take my soul and present it to my eternal Judge. Do not abandon me, oh my queen. Thou, next to Jesus, must be my comfort in that dreadful moment. Entreat thy Son that in his goodness, he will grant me the favor to die clasping thy feet, and to breathe out my soul in his sacred wounds, saying, Jesus and Mary, I give you my heart and my soul.

THE GLORIES OF MARY.

PART I.

ON THE SALVE REGINA.

It treats of the various and abundant graces which the mother of God bestows on her devoted servants, in several discourses of the Salve Regina.

only be considered as common to the mother and the Son, but even the same.*

If Jesus is the king of the whole world, Mary is also queen of the whole world :† therefore, says St. Bernardine of Sienna, all creatures who serve God ought also to serve Mary; for all angels and men, and all things that are in heaven and on earth being subject to the dominion of God, are also subject to the dominion of the glorious Virgin.‡ Hence Guerric, abbot, thus addresses the divine mother: Continue, Mary, continue in security to reign; dispose, according to thy will, of every thing belonging to thy Son, for thou, being mother and spouse of the King of the world, the kingdom and power over all creatures is due to thee as queen.§

Mary, then, is queen; but let all learn for their consolation that she is a mild and merciful queen, desiring the good of us poor sinners. Hence the holy Church bids us salute her in this prayer, and name her the *Queen of Mercy*. The very name of queen signifies, as blessed Albertus Magnus remarks, compassion, and provision for the poor; differing in this from the ti-

*Neque a dominatione filii Mater potest esse sejuncta, una est Mariæ et Christi caro.

Filii gloriam cum Matre, non tam communem judico, quam eamdem. S. Arnol. de Laud. Virg.

†Regina constituta, totum jure possidet filli regnum. Rupert, abb.

‡ Tot creaturæ serviunt gloriosæ Virgini, quot serviunt Trinitati; omnes namque creaturæ sive angeli, sive homines, et omnia quæ sunt in cœlo et in terra, quia omnia sunt divino imperio subjecta, gloriosæ Virgini sunt subjectæ. Tom. 2, cap. 61.

§ Perge Maria, perge secura in bonis filii tui; fiducialite age tamquam regina, mater regis et sponsa; tibi debetur regnum et potestas.

tle of empress, which signifies severity and rigor. The greatness of kings and queens consists in comforting the wretched as Seneca says.* So that whereas tyrants, in reigning, have only their own advantage in view, kings should have for their object the good of their subjects. Therefore at the consecration of kings their heads are anointed with oil, which is the symbol of mercy, to denote that they, in reigning, should above all things cherish thoughts of kindness and beneficence towards their subjects.

Kings should then principally occupy themselves with works of mercy, but not to the neglect of the exercise of justice towards the guilty, when it is required. Not so Mary, who, although queen, is not queen of justice, intent upon the punishment of the guilty, but queen of mercy, solely intent upon compassion and pardon for sinners. Accordingly, the Church requires us explicitly to call her queen of mercy. The High Chancellor of Paris, John Gerson, meditating on the words of David, "These two things have I heard, that power belongeth to God, and mercy to thee, O Lord,"† says, that the kingdom of God consisting of justice and mercy, the Lord has divided it: he has reserved the kingdom of justice for himself, and he has granted the kingdom of mercy to Mary, ordaining that all the mercies which are dispensed to

* Hoc reges habent magnificum, prodesse miseris.

† Duo hæc audivi, quia potestas Dei est, et tibi, Domine, misericordia. Psal. lxi. 12.

men should pass through the hands of Mary, and should be bestowed according to her good pleasure.* St. Thomas confirms this in his preface to the Canonical Epistles, saying that the holy Virgin, when she conceived the divine Word in her womb, and brought him forth, obtained the half of the kingdom of God by becoming queen of mercy, Jesus Christ remaining king of justice.†

The eternal Father constituted Jesus Christ king of justice, and therefore made him the universal judge of the world; hence the prophet sang: "Give to the king thy judgment, Oh God; and to the king's son thy justice."‡ Here a learned interpreter takes up the subject, and says: Oh Lord, thou hast given to thy Son thy justice, because thou hast given to the mother of the king thy mercy.§ And St. Bonaventure happily varies the passage above quoted by saying: Give to the king thy judgment, Oh God, and to his mother thy mercy.‖ Ernest, Archbishop of Prague, also says, that the eternal Father has given to the Son the office of judging and punishing, and to the mother the office of

* Regnum Dei consistit in potestate et misericordia; potestate Deo remanente, cessit quodammodo misericordiæ pars matri regnanti. Psal. iii. Tr. 4th, S. Magn.

† Quando filium Dei in utero concepit, et post modum peperit, dimidiam partem regni Dei impetravit, ut ipsa sit regina misericordiæ, ut Christus est rex justitiæ.

‡ Deus judicium tuum regi da; et justitiam tuam filio regis. Psal. lxxi. 2.

§ Quia misericordiam tuam dedisti Matri Regis.

‖ Deus judicium tuum regi da, et misericordiam tuam matri ejus.

compassionating and relieving the wretched.* Therefore the Prophet David predicted that God himself, if I may thus express it, would consecrate Mary queen of mercy, anointing her with the oil of gladness,† in order that all of us miserable children of Adam might rejoice in the thought of having in heaven that great queen, so full of the unction of mercy and pity for us; as St. Bonaventure says: Oh Mary, so full of the unction of mercy and the oil of pity, that God has anointed thee with the oil of gladness!‡

And how well does blessed Albertus Magnus here apply the history of Queen Esther, who was indeed a type of Our Queen Mary! We read in the 4th chap. of the Book of Esther, that in the reign of King Assuerus, there went forth, throughout his kingdom, a decree commanding the death of all the Jews. Then Mardochai, who was one of the condemned, committed their cause to Esther, that she might intercede with the king to obtain the revocation of the sentence. At first Esther refused to take upon herself this office, fearing that it would excite the anger of the king more. But Mardochai rebuked her, and bade her remember that she must not think of saving herself alone, as the Lord had placed her upon the throne to obtain salvation for all the Jews: "Think not that thou mayest

* Pater omne judicium dedit filio, et omne officium misericordiæ dedit matri.

† Unxit te Deus oleo lætitiæ. Psal. xliv. 8.

‡ Maria, plena unctione misericordiæ et oleo pictatis; propterea unxit te Deus oleo lætitiæ. In spec. cap. 7.

save thy life only, because thou art in the king's house, more than all the Jews." * Thus said Mardochai to Queen Esther, and thus might we poor sinners say to our Queen Mary, if she were ever reluctant to intercede with God for our deliverance from the just punishment of our sins. Think not that thou mayest save thy life only, because thou art in the king's house, more than all men. Think not, oh Lady, that God has exalted thee to be queen of the world, only to secure thy own welfare; but also that thou, being so greatly elevated, mayest the more compassionate and the better relieve us miserable sinners. Assuerus, when he saw Esther before him, affectionately inquired of her what she had come to ask of him: "What is thy petition?" Then the queen answered, "If I have found favor in thy sight, oh king, give me my people for which I request." † Assuerus heard her, and immediately ordered the sentence to be revoked. Now, if Assuerus granted to Esther, because he loved her, the salvation of the Jews, will not God graciously listen to Mary, in his boundless love for her, when she prays to him for those poor sinners who recommend themselves to her and says to him: If I have found favor in thy sight, oh King, my King and my God, if I have ever found favor with Thee (and well does the di-

* Ne putes quod animam tuam tantum liberes, quia in domo regis es præ cunctis Judæis. Esth. iv. 13.

† Quæ est petitio tua? Si inveni gratiam in oculis tuis o rex, dona mihi populum meum, pro quo obsecro.

vine mother know herself to be the blessed, the fortunate, the only one of the children of men who found the grace lost by man; she knows herself to be the beloved of her Lord, more beloved than all the saints and angels united), give me my people for which I request: if thou lovest me, she says to him, give me, oh my Lord, these sinners in whose behalf I entreat Thee. Is it possible that God will not graciously hear her? Is there any one who does not know the power of Mary's prayers with God? The law of clemency is on her tongue. * Every prayer of hers is as a law established by our Lord, that mercy shall be exercised towards those for whom Mary intercedes. St. Bernard asks, Why does the Church name Mary *Queen of Mercy?* and answers, Because we believe that she opens the depths of the mercy of God, to whom she will, when she will, and as she will; so that not even the vilest sinner is lost, if Mary protects him. †

But it may, perhaps, be feared that Mary disdains interposing in behalf of some sinners, because she finds them so laden with sins? Perhaps the majesty and sanctity of this great queen should alarm us? No, says St. Gregory, in proportion to her greatness and holiness are her clemency and mercy towards sinners who desire to

*Lex clementiæ in lingua ejus. Prov. xxxi. 26.

†Quod divinæ pietatis abyssum cui vult, quando vult et quomodo vult, creditur aperire; ut nemo tam enormis peccator pereat, cui sancta sanctorum pratrocinii suffragia præstat. In Salve Regina.

amend, and who have recourse to her.* Kings and queens inspire terror by the display of their majesty, and their subjects fear to enter their presence; but what fear, says St. Bernard, can the wretched have of going to this queen of mercy since she never shows herself terrible or austere to those who seek her, but all sweetness and kindness?† Mary not only gives, but she herself presents to us milk and wool: the milk of mercy to inspire us with confidence, and wool to shield us from the thunderbolts of divine justice!

Suetonius narrates of the Emperor Titus, that he never could refuse a favor to any one who asked it, and that he even sometimes promised more than he could perform; and he answered to one who admonished him of this, that a prince should not dismiss any one from his presence dissatisfied. Titus said this, but, in reality, was perhaps often either guilty of falsehood, or failed in his promises. But our queen cannot lie, and can obtain whatever she wishes for her devoted servants. She has a heart so kind and compassionate, says Blosius, that she cannot send away dissatisfied any one who invokes her aid.‡ But, as St. Bernard says, how couldst thou, oh Mary, refuse succor to the wretched, when thou art queen of mercy? and who are the

* Maria quanto altior et sanctior, tanto clementior et dulcior circa conversos peccatores. Lib. 1, ep. 47.

† Quid ad Mariam accedere trepidat humana fragilitas? Nihil austerum in ea, nihil terribile; tota suavis est, omnibus offerens lac et lanam. Super Sign. Magn.

‡ Ita benigna est, ut neminem tristem redire sinat. Lib. 4, c. 12.

subjects of mercy, if not the miserable? Thou art the queen of mercy, and I the most miserable of all sinners; if I, then, am the first of thy subjects, then thou shouldst have more care of me than of all others.*

Have pity on us, then, oh queen of mercy, and give heed to our salvation; neither say to us, oh most holy Virgin, as St. Gregory of Nicomedia would add, that thou canst not aid us because of the multitude of our sins, when thou hast such power and pity that no number of sins can ever surpass it! Nothing resists thy power, since thy Creator and ours, while he honors thee as his mother, considers thy glory as his own, and exulting in it, as a Son, grants thy petitions as if he were discharging an obligation.† By this he means to say, that though Mary is under an infinite obligation to her Son for having elected her to be his mother yet it cannot be denied that the Son also is greatly indebted to his mother for having given him his human nature; whence Jesus, as if to recompense Mary as he ought, while he enjoys this his glory, honors her especially by always graciously listening to her prayers.

How great then should be our confidence in

* Tu es regina misericordiæ, et ego miserrimus peccator, subditorum maximus. Rege nos ergo, o regina misericordiæ. In Salv. Reg,

† Habes vires insuperabiles, ne clementiam tuam superet multitudo peccatorum. Nihil tuæ resistet potentiæ; tuam enim gloriam Creator existimat esse propriam, et filius in ea exultans, quasi ex solvens debitum, implet petitiones tuas. Or. de exitu, R. V.

this queen, knowing how powerful she is with God, and at the same time how rich and full of mercy; so much so that there is no one on earth who does not share in the mercies and favors of Mary! This the blessed Virgin herself revealed to St. Bridget: "I am," she said to her, "the queen of heaven and the mother of mercy; I am the joy of the just, and the gate of entrance for sinners to God; neither is there living on earth a sinner who is so accursed that he is deprived of my compassion; for every one, if he receives nothing else through my intercession, receives the grace of being less tempted by evil spirits than he otherwise would be; no one, therefore," she added, "who is not entirely accursed" (by which is meant the final and irrevocable malediction pronounced against the damned), "is so entirely cast off by God that he may not return and enjoy his mercy if he invokes my aid. I am called by all the mother of mercy, and truly the mercy of God towards men has made me so merciful towards them." And then she concluded by saying," Therefore he shall be miserable, and forever miserable in another life, who in this, being able, does not have recourse to me, who am so compassionate to all, and so earnestly desire to aid sinners."*

* Ego regina cœli; ego mater misericordiæ; ego justorum gaudium et aditus peccatorum ad Deum. Nullus est adeo maledictus, qui quamdiu vivit careat misericordia mea; quia propter ne levius tentatur a dæmonibus, quam alias tentaretur. Nullus est ita abjectus a Deo. nisi fuerit omnino maledictus, qui si me invocaverit, non revertatur ad Deum, et habiturus. sit misericordiam. Ego vocor ab

Let us then have recourse, let us always have recourse to this most sweet queen, if we would be sure of our salvation; and if the sight of our sins terrifies and disheartens us, let us remember that Mary was made queen of mercy for this very end, that she might save by her protection the greatest and most abandoned sinners who have recourse to her. They are to be her crown in heaven, as her divine spouse has said: "Come from Libanus, my spouse, come from Libanus, come; thou shalt be crowned from the dens of the lions, from the mountains of the leopards."* And what are these dens of wild beasts and monsters, if not miserable sinners, whose souls become dens of sins, the most deformed monsters? Now, by these same sinners, as Rupert, the abbot, remarks, who are saved by thy means, oh great Queen Mary, thou wilt be crowned in heaven; for their salvation will be thy crown, a crown indeed worthy and fit for a queen of mercy;† and let the following example illustrate this.

EXAMPLE.

We read in the life of sister Catherine, an Augustinian nun, that in the place where that servant of God lived, there lived also a woman

omnibus mater misericordiæ, et vere misericordia illius misericordem me fecit. Ideo miser erit qui ad misericordem, cum possit, non accedit. Rev. Lib. 1, cap. 6.

* Veni de Libano, sponsa mea, veni de Libano, veni; coronaberis .... de cubilibus leonum, de montibus pardorum. Cant. 4. 8.

† De talium leonem cubiculis tu coronaberis. Eorum salus corona tua erit. Rup. Vid. 1. 3., in Cant.

named Mary, who, in her youth, was a sinner, and obstinately persevered in her evil courses, even to extreme old age. For this she was banished by her fellow-citizens, forced to live in a cave beyond the limits of the place, and died in a state of loathsome corruption, abandoned by all, and without the sacraments; and on this account was buried in a field, like a beast. Now sister Catherine, who was accustomed to recommend very affectionately to God the souls of those who had departed this life, after learning the miserable death of this poor old woman, did not think of praying for her, as she and every one else believed her already among the damned. Four years having past, a soul from purgatory one day appeared to her, and said, "Sister Catherine, how unhappy is my fate! you commend to God the souls of all those who die, and for my soul alone you have had no pity." "And who are you?" said the servant of God. "I am," answered she, "that poor Mary who died in the cave." "How! are you saved?" exclaimed sister Catherine. "Yes, I am saved," she said, "by the mercy of the Virgin Mary." "And how?" "When I saw death drawing near, finding myself laden with sins, and abandoned by all, I turned to the mother of God and said to her, Lady, thou art the refuge of the abandoned, behold me at this hour deserted by all; thou art my only hope, thou alone canst help me; have pity on me. The holy Virgin obtained for me the grace of

making an act of contrition; I died and am saved, and my queen has also obtained for me the grace that my pains should be abridged, and that I should, by suffering intensely for a short time, pass through that purification which otherwise would have lasted many years. A few masses only are needed to obtain my release from purgatory. I pray thee cause them to be offered for me, and I promise to pray God and Mary for thee." Sister Catherine immediately caused those masses to be said for her, and that soul, after a few days, appeared to her again, more brilliant than the sun, and said to her, "I thank thee, sister Catherine: behold I am now going to paradise to sing the mercy of God and pray for thee."

PRAYER.

Oh Mother of my God and my Lady Mary, as a poor wounded and loathsome wretch presents himself to a great queen, I present myself to thee, who art the queen of heaven and earth. From the lofty throne on which thou art seated, do not disdain, I pray thee, to cast thy eye upon me, a poor sinner. God hath made thee so rich in order that thou mayest succor the needy, and hath made thee queen of mercy that thou mayest help the miserable, look upon me, then, and have pity on me. Look upon me, and do not leave me until thou hast changed me from a sinner into a saint. I see I merit noth-

ing, or rather I merit for my ingratitude to be deprived of all the graces which, by thy means, I have received from the Lord. But thou, who art the mother of mercy, dost not require merits, but miseries, that thou mayest succor those who are in need; and who is more poor and more needy than I?

Oh glorious Virgin, I know that thou, being queen of the universe, art also my queen; and I, in a more especial manner, would dedicate myself to thy service; that thou mayest dispose of me as seemeth best to thee. Therefore I say to thee with St. Bonaventure, Oh, Lady, I submit myself to thy control, that thou mayest rule and govern me entirely. Do not leave me to myself.* Rule me, oh my queen, and do not leave me to myself. Command me, employ me as thou wilt, and punish me if I do not obey thee, for very salutary will be the punishments that come from thy hand. I would esteem it a greater thing to be thy servant than Lord of the whole earth. *Thine I am, save me!*† Accept me, oh Mary, for thy own and attend to my salvation, as I am thine own. I no longer will be my own, I give myself to thee. And if hitherto I have so poorly served thee, having lost so many good occasions of honoring thee, for the time to come I will unite myself to thy most loving and most faithful servants. No one

* Domina, me tuæ dominationi volo committere, ut me plenarie regas et gubernes. Non mihi me relinquas.

† Tuus sum ego, salvum me fac.

from this time henceforth shall surpass me in honoring and loving thee, my most lovely queen. This I promise, and I hope to perform with thy assistance. Amen."

SECTION II.

HOW MUCH GREATER SHOULD BE OUR CONFIDENCE IN MARY BECAUSE SHE IS OUR MOTHER.

Not by chance, nor in vain, do the servants of Mary call her mother, and it would seem that they cannot invoke her by any other name, and are never weary of calling her mother; mother, indeed, for she is truly our mother, not according to the flesh, but the spiritual mother of our souls and of our salvation. Sin, when it deprived our souls of divine grace, also deprived them of life. Hence, when they were dead in misery and sin, Jesus our Redeemer came with an excess of mercy and love to restore to us, by his death upon the cross, that lost life, as he has himself declared: "I am come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly."* *More abundantly*, because, as the theologians teach us, Jesus Christ by his redemption brought us blessings greater than the injury Adam inflicted upon us by his sin; he reconciled us to God, and thus became the father of our souls, under the new law of grace, as the

* Veni, ut vitam. habeant et abundantius habeant. Joan.

prophet Isaiah predicted: "The Father of the world to come, the Prince of peace."* But if Jesus is the father of our souls, Mary is the mother; for, in giving us Jesus, she gave us the true life; and offering upon Calvary the life of her Son for our salvation, she then brought us forth to the life of divine grace.

At two different times, then as the holy Fathers show us, Mary became our spiritual mother; the first when she was found worthy of conceiving in her virginal womb the Son of God, as the blessed Albertus Magnus says.

St. Bernardine of Sienna more distinctly teaches us that when the most holy Virgin, on the annunciation of the angel, gave her consent to become mother of the eternal Word, which he awaited before making himself her Son, she by this consent even from that time demanded of God, with lively affection, our salvation; and she was so earnestly engaged in obtaining it, that from that time she has borne us, as it were, in her womb, as a most loving mother.†

St. Luke says, speaking of the birth of our Saviour, that Mary "brought forth her first-born son."‡ Therefore, says a certain writer, if the evangelist affirms that Mary brought forth her first-born, is it to be supposed that she afterwards

* Pater futuri sæculi, princeps pacis. Isa. ix. 6.

† Virgo per hunc consensum in incarnatione filii omnium salutem vigorosissime expetiit et procuravit; et omnium salvationi per hunc consensum se dedicavit, ita ut ex tunc omnes in suis visceribus bajulat, tanquam verissima mater filios suos. Tr. de B. V. serm. 6.

‡ Peperit filium suum primogenitum. Luc. cap. ii. 7.

had other children? But the same author adds: If it is of faith that Mary had no other children according to the flesh except Jesus, then she must have other spiritual children, and these we are.* Our Lord revealed this to St. Gertrude, who, reading one day the passage of the Gospel just quoted, was troubled, not knowing how to understand it, that Mary being mother of Jesus Christ alone, it could be said that he was her first-born. And God explained it to her, by telling her that Jesus was her first-born according to the flesh, but men were her second-born according to the spirit.

And this explains what is said of Mary in the holy Canticles: "Thy belly is as a heap of wheat, set about with lilies."† St. Ambrose explains this and says: Although in the pure womb of Mary there was only one grain of wheat, which was Jesus Christ, yet it is called a heap of grain, because in that one grain were contained all the elect, of whom Mary was to be the mother.‡ Hence, William the Abbot wrote, Mary, in bringing forth Jesus, who is our Saviour and our life, brought forth all of us to life and salvation.§

* Si primogenitus, ergo alii filii secuti sunt secundogeniti? Carnales nullos habet B. Virgo, præter Christum; ergo spirituales habeat necesse est.

† Venter tuus sicut acervus tritici, vallatus liliis. Cant. vii. 2.

‡ Unum granum frumenti fuit in utero Virginis, Christus Dominus; et tamen acervus tritici dicitur, quia granum hoc virtute omnes electos continet, ut ipse sit primogenitus in multis fratribus. De Instit. Virg.

§ In illo uno fructu, in uno salvatore omnium Jesu plurimos Maria

The second time in which Mary brought us forth to grace was, when on Calvary, she offered to the eternal Father with so much sorrow of heart the life of her beloved Son for our salvation. Wherefore, St. Augustine asserts, that, having then co-operated by her love with Christ in the birth of the faithful to the life of grace, she became also by this co-operation the spiritual mother of us all, who are members of our head, Jesus Christ.* This is also the meaning of what is said of the blessed Virgin in the sacred Canticles: "They have made me the keeper in the vineyards; my vineyard I have not kept."† Mary, to save our souls, was willing to sacrifice the life of her Son,‡ as William the Abbot remarks. And who was the soul of Mary, but her Jesus, who was her life and all her love? Wherefore St. Simeon announced to her that her soul would one day be pierced by a sword of sorrow;§ which was the very spear that pierced the side of Jesus, who was the soul of Mary. And then she in her sorrow brought us forth to eternal life; so that we may all call ourselves children of the dolors of Mary. She, our most loving mother, was always and wholly united to

peperit ad salutem. Pariendo vitam, multos peperit ad vitam. In Cant. iv. 13.

* Illa spiritu mater est membrorum salvatoris, quia cooperata est charitate, ut fideles in ecclesia nascerentur. De Virg. cap. 6.

† Posuit me custodem in vineis; vineam meam non custodivi. Cant. i. 5.

‡ Ut multas animas salvas faceret, animam suam morti exposuit.

§ Et tuam ipsius animam doloris gladius pertransibit. Luc. ii. 35.

the divine will; whence St. Bonaventure remarks, that when she saw the love of the eternal Father for men, who would have his Son die for our salvation, and the love of the Son in wishing to die for us, she too, with her whole will, offered her Son and consented that he should die that we might be saved, in order to conform herself to that exceeding love of the Father and Son for the human race.*

It is true that, in dying for the redemption of the world, Jesus wished to be alone. I have trodden the wine-press alone,† "Torcular calcavi solus." But when God saw the great desire of Mary to devote herself also to the salvation of men, he ordained that by the sacrifice and offering of the life of this same Jesus, she might co-operate with him in the work of our salvation, and thus become mother of our souls. And this our Saviour signified, when, before expiring, he saw from the cross his mother and the disciple St. John both standing near him, and first spoke to Mary: Behold thy son, "Ecce filius tuus;"‡ as if he said to her: Behold the man who, by the offering thou hast made of my life for his salvation, is already born to grace. And then turning to the disciple, he said: Behold thy mother, "Ecce mater tua."§ By which words, says St.

* Nullo modo dubitandum est, quia Mariæ animus volut etiam tradere filium suum pro salute generis humani, ut mater per omnia conformis fieret Patri et Filio.

† Isa. lxiii. 3.

‡ Joan. xix. 26.

§ Deinde dicit discipulo: Ecce mater tua. Joan xix. 27.

Bernardine of Sienna, Mary was then made mother not only of St. John, but of all men, for the love she bore them. * On this account, as Silveira observes, St. John himself, when recording this fact in his Gospel, wrote, "After that he said to the disciple: "Behold thy mother."† Let it be remarked that Jesus Christ did not say this to John, but to the disciple, to signify that the Saviour appointed Mary for common mother of all those who, being Christians, bear the name of his disciples.‡

I am the mother of fair love,§ "Ego sum mater pulchræ dilectionis," said Mary; because her love, as an author remarks, which renders the souls of men beautiful in the eye of God, prompts her, as a loving mother, to receive us for her children.‖ And as a mother loves her children, and watches over their welfare, so thou, oh our most sweet queen, lovest us, and dost procure our happiness, says St. Bonaventure.¶

Oh, happy those who live under the protection of a mother so loving and so powerful! The prophet David, although Mary was not yet

* In Joanne intelligimus omnes, quorum B. Virgo per dilectionem facta est mater. Tom 1, Serm. 55.

† Deinde dicit discipulo; Ecce mater tua. Joan. xix. 27.

‡ Joanne est nomen particulare, discipulus commune, ut denotetur quod Maria omnibus detur in matrem.

§ Ego sum mater pulchræ dilectionis. Eccli. xxiv. 24.

‖ Quia tota es amor erga nos, quos in filios recepit. Paciucch. de B. V.

¶ Nonne plus sine comparatione nos diligis, ac bona nostra procuras, quam mater carnalis?

born, besought of God salvation, by dedicating himself to Mary as her son, and thus prayed: "Save the son of thy handmaid."* Whose handmaid?" asks St. Augustine,† "she who says: Behold the handmaid of the Lord."‡ And who, says Cardinal Bellarmine, who would dare to snatch these children from the bosom of Mary, where they have taken refuge from their enemies? What fury of hell or of passion can conquer them, if they place their trust in the protection of this great mother?§ It is narrated of the whale, that when she sees her young in peril, from the tempest or their pursuers, she opens her mouth and receives them into her bowels. Just so, says Novarino, does this compassionate mother of the faithful, when the tempest of the passions is raging. She then, with maternal affection, protects them as it were in her bowels, and continues to shelter them until she has placed them in the secure haven of paradise.‖ Oh, most loving mother! Oh, most compassionate mother, be ever blessed! and may that God be ever blessed, who has given us thee as a mother, and as a secure refuge in all the dangers of this life. The bless-

* Salvum fac filium ancillæ tuæ. Psal. lxxxv. 16.

† Cujus ancillæ?

‡ Quæ dit: Ecce ancilla Domini. In Psal. lxxxv.

§ Quam bene nobis erit sub præsidio tantæ matris? Quis detrahere audebit de sinu ejus ? Quæ nos tentatio, aut turbatio superare poterit confidentes in patrocinio matris Dei et nostræ Bell. de sept verb.

‖ Fidelium piissima mater, furente tentationum tempestate, materno affectu eos, velut intra viscera propria receptos protegit, donec in beatum portum reponat. V. cap. 14, exc. 81.

ed Virgin herself revealed this to St. Bridget, saying: "As a mother who sees her son exposed to the sword of the enemy, makes every effort to save him, thus do I, and will I ever do for my children, sinful though they be, if they come to me for help."* Behold, then, how in every battle with hell we shall always conquer, and certainly conquer, if we have recourse to the mother of God and our mother, always repeating: "We fly to thy protection, oh holy mother of God; we fly to thy protection, oh holy mother of God."† Oh, how many victories have the faithful obtained over hell, by having recourse to Mary with this short but powerful prayer! That great servant of God, Sister Mary of the Crucifixion, a Benedictine nun, by this means always conquered the evil spirits.

Be joyful then, all ye children of Mary; remember that she adopts as her children all those who wish her for their mother. Joyful; for what fear have you of being lost when this mother defends and protects you? Thus says St. Bonaventure: Every one who loves this good mother and trusts in her protection, should take courage and repeat: What do you fear, oh my soul? The cause of thy eternal salvation will not be lost, as the final sentence depends upon Jesus, who is thy brother, and upon Mary who is thy

* Ita ego facio, et faciam omnibus peccatoribus misericordiam meam potentibus. Lib. 4, c. 38.

† Sub tuum præsidium confugimus, sancta Dei genetrix.

mother.* And St. Anselm full of joy at this thought, exclaims, in order to encourage us: Oh, blessed confidence! Oh, secure refuge! The mother of God is my mother also. With what certainty may we hope, since our salvation depends upon the sentence of a good brother and of a kind mother!† Hear, then, our mother who calls us, and says to us; "Whosoever is a little one, let him come to me."‡ Little children have always on their lips the word mother, and in all the dangers to which they are exposed, and in all their fears, they cry mother, Ah, most sweet Mary! Ah, most loving mother! this is exactly what thou dost desire; that we become little children, and always call upon thee in our dangers, and always have recourse to thee, for thou wishest to aid and save us, as thou hast saved all thy children who have had recourse to thee.

* Dic, anima mea, cum magna fiducia: Exultabo et lætabor, quia quicquid judicabitur de me pendet ex sententia fratris et matris meæ.

† Oh beata fiducia, oh tutum refugium! Mater Dei est mater mea. Qua certitudine igitur debemus sperare, quoniam salus de boni fratris et piæ matris pendet arbitrio! In Depr. ad. V.

‡ Si quis est parvulus, veniat ad me. Prov. ix. 4.

EXAMPLE.

In the history of the foundations of the Company of Jesus, in the kingdom of Naples, is related the following story of a noble youth of Scotland, named William Elphinstone. He was a relation of King James. Born a heretic, he

followed the false sect to which he belonged; but enlightened by divine grace, which showed him his errors, he went to France, where, with the assistance of a good Jesuit father, who was like himself a Scotchman, and still more by the intercession of the blessed Virgin, he at length saw the truth, abjured heresy, and became a Catholic. He went afterwards to Rome, where a friend of his found him one day very much afflicted, and weeping. He asked him the cause, and he answered, that in the night his mother had appeared to him and said: "My son, it is well for thee that thou hast entered the true Church; I am already lost, because I died in heresy." From that time he became more fervent in his devotion to Mary, chose her for his mother, and by her was inspired to become a religious. He made a vow to do so, but being ill, he went to Naples to restore his health by a change of air. But the Lord ordered it so that he should die in Naples, and die a religious; for, having become dangerously ill soon after his arrival there, he by prayers and tears obtained from the superiors admittance, and when about receiving the viaticum, he made his vows in presence of the blessed sacrament, and was enrolled in the society. After this, in the tenderness of his feelings, he gave thanks to his mother Mary for having rescued him from heresy, and brought him to die in the true Church, and in a religious house in the midst of his brethren. Therefore, he exclaimed: "Oh! how glorious it is to die in

the midst of so many angels!" Being exhorted to take a little rest, he answered: "Ah, this is not the time to rest when the end of my life is drawing near." Before dying, he said to the persons present: "Brethren, do you not see the angels of heaven around me?" One of the religious having heard him murmuring something to himself, asked him what he had said. He answered, that his angel-guardian had revealed to him that he should be in purgatory but a short time, and would soon enter paradise. Then he began again to talk with his sweet mother Mary, and repeating the word, mother, mother, he tranquilly expired, like a child falling asleep in the arms of its mother. Soon after, it was revealed to a devout religious that he had already entered paradise.

PRAYER.

Oh, my most holy mother, how is it possible that, having so holy a mother, I should be so wicked? A mother so inflamed with love to God, and that I should so love creatures? A mother so rich in virtue, and that I should be so poor? Oh, my most amiable mother! I no longer deserve, it is true, to be thy son, because by my bad life I have rendered myself unworthy. I am content if thou wilt accept me as thy servant. I am ready to renounce all the kingdoms of the earth, to be admitted among the lowest of thy servants. Yes, I am content, but do not

forbid me to call thee my mother. This name wholly consoles me, melts me, and reminds me of my obligation to love thee. This name encourages me to confide in thee. When I am the most terrified at the thought of my sins and of the divine justice, I feel myself comforted by the remembrance that thou art my mother. Permit me, then, to call thee my mother, my sweetest mother. Thus I call thee, and thus I will ever call thee. Thou, next to God, shalt always be my hope, my refuge, and my love, in this valley of tears. And thus I hope to die, commending my soul, at the last moment, into thy sacred hands, saying: "My mother, my mother Mary, help me, have pity on me." Amen.

SECTION III.

HOW GREAT IS THE LOVE OF OUR MOTHER FOR US.

If, then, Mary is our mother, let us consider how much she loves us. The love of parents for their children is a necessary love, and for this reason, as St. Thomas observes,* children are commanded in the divine law to love their parents; but there is no command, on the other hand, given to parents to love their children, for love towards one's own offspring is a love so deeply planted in the heart by nature her-

* Opusc. 60, cap. 4

self, that even the wild beasts, as St. Ambrose says, never fail to love their young.* It is said that even tigers, hearing the cry of their whelps when they are taken by the hunters, will plunge into the sea to swim after the vessels where they are confined. If, then, says our most loving mother Mary, even tigers cannot forget their young, how can I forget to love you, my children? And, she adds, even if it should happen that a mother could forget her child, it is not possible that I can forget a soul which is my child.†

Mary is our mother, not according to the flesh, but by love: "I am the mother of fair love."‡ Hence she becomes our mother only on account of the love she bears us; and she glories, says a certain author, in being the mother of love; because, having taken us for her children, she is all love towards us.§ Who can describe the love of Mary for us miserable creatures? Arnold of Carnotensis says that, at the death of Jesus Christ, she ardently desired to die with her Son for our sake.‖ So that, as St. Ambrose adds, when her Son hung dying on the cross,

* Natura hoc bestiis infundit, ut catulos parvulos ament. Lib. 6, Exa. c. 4.

† Nunquid oblivisci potest mulier infantem suum, ut non misereatur filio uteri sui? Et si illa oblita fuerit ego tamen non obliviscar tui. Isa. xlix.15.

‡ Ego mater pulchræ dilectionis. Eccl. xxiv. 24.

§ Se dilectionis esse matrem gloriatur, quia tota est amor erga nos, quos in filios recepit. Paciucch.

‖ Flagrabat Virgo æstuante charitate incensa, ut pro humani generis salute simul cum prole profunderet vitam. Tract de. Verb. Dom.

Mary offered herself to his murderers, that she might give her life for us.*

But let us consider the reasons of this love, for thus we shall better understand how this good mother loves us. The first reason of the great love that Mary bears to men, is the great love she bears to God. Love to God and man is contained in the same precept, as St. John has written: "This commandment we have from God, that he who loveth God, love also his brother;"† so that one increases as the other increases. Hence what have the saints not done for love of the neighbor, because they have loved God so much? They have gone so far as to expose and lose liberty and even life for his salvation. Let us read what St. Francis Xavier did in India, where, for the sake of the souls of those barbarians, he climbed mountains, and exposed himself to innumerable dangers to find those wretched beings, in the caverns where they dwelt like wild beasts, and to lead them to God. St. Francis de Sales, to convert the heretics of the province of Chablais, risked his life by crossing a river every day for a year, on his hands and knees, upon a frozen beam, that he might go to the other side to preach to those stubborn men. St. Paulinus became a slave, to obtain liberty for the son of a poor widow. St. Fidelis, to bring the heretics of a

* Pendebat in cruce filius, mater persecutoribus se offerebat. De Inst. Virg. c. 7.

† Hoc mandatum habemus a Deo, ut qui diligit Deum, diligat et fratrem suum. 1 Joan. iv. 21.

certain place back to God, willingly consented, in preaching to them, to lose his life. The saints, then, because they have loved God so much, have done much for love of the neighbor. But who has loved God more than Mary? She loved God more, in the first moment of her life, than all the saints and angels have loved him in the whole course of theirs; as we shall consider at length, when we speak of the virtues of Mary. She herself revealed to sister Mary of the Crucifixion,* that the fire of love with which she burned for God was so great, that it would in a moment inflame heaven and earth; and that, in comparison to it, all the flames of the burning love of the seraphim were as cool breezes. Therefore, as there is none among the blessed spirits who loves God more than Mary; so there is, and can be none, except God, who loves us more than this our most loving mother. If the love of all mothers for their children, of all husbands for their wives, and of all saints and angels for their devoted servants, were united, it would not be so great as the love that Mary bears to one soul alone. Father Nierembergh says that the love which all mothers have borne to their children is a shadow when compared with the love which Mary bears to any one of us. Truly she alone loves us more, he adds, than all the angels and saints united.

Moreover, our mother loves us much, because

* Vita, Lib. 2, cap. 5.

we have been commended to her as children by her beloved Jesus, when, before expiring, he said to her: "Woman, behold thy son;"* signifying by the person of John, all men, as we have before remarked. These were the last words of her Son to her. The last remembrances left by beloved friends at the moment of their death are greatly valued, and the memory of them is never lost. Moreover, we are children extremely dear to Mary, because we cost her so much suffering. Those children are much dearer to a mother whose lives she has preserved;—we are those children, for whom, that we may have the life of grace, Mary suffered the pain of sacrificing the dear life of her Jesus; submitting, for our sake, to see him die before her eyes in cruel torments. By this great offering of Mary we were then born to the life of divine grace. So, then, we are children very dear to her, because we were redeemed at such a cost of suffering. Accordingly, as we read of the love which the eternal Father has manifested for men by giving his own Son to death for us, "God so loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son:"† as St. Bonaventure remarks, it may be said of Mary also, that she so loved us as to give her only-begotten Son.‡ And when did she give him to us? She gave him to us, says Father Nieremberg, when first she consented to his death; she gave him to

* Mulier ecce filius tuus.

† "Sic Deus dilexit mundum, ut filium suum unigenitum daret." Joan. iii. 16.

‡ Sic Maria dilexit nos, ut filium suum unigenitum daret.

us, when others deserted him through hatred or through fear, and she alone could have defended, before the judges, the life of her Son. We can easily believe that the words of so wise and tender a mother would have had a great power, at least with Pilate, to induce him to abstain from condemning to death a man whom he knew and declared innocent. But no, Mary would not utter even one word in favor of her Son, to prevent his death, upon which our salvation depended; finally, she gave him to us again at the foot of the cross, in those three hours when she was witnessing his death; because then, at every moment, she was offering up for us his life, with the deepest grief, and the greatest love for us, at the cost of great trouble and suffering, and with such firmness, that if executioners had been wanting, as St. Anselm and St. Antoninus tell us, she herself would have crucified him in obedience to the will of the Father, who had decreed he should die for our salvation. And if Abraham showed a similar fortitude in consenting to sacrifice his son with his own hands, we must believe that Mary would certainly have done the same, with more resolution, as she was holier, and more obedient than Abraham. But to return to our subject. How grateful should we be to Mary, for an act of so much love! for the sacrifice she made of the life of her Son, in the midst of so much anguish, to obtain salvation for us all! The Lord, indeed, rewarded Abraham for the sacrifice he was pre-

pared to make to him of his son Isaac; but what can we render to Mary for the life of her Jesus, as she has given us a Son more noble and beloved than the son of Abraham? This love of Mary, says St. Bonaventure, greatly obliges us to love her, seeing that she has loved us more than any other created being loves us, since she has given for us her only Son, whom she loved more than herself.*

And from this follows another reason why we are so much beloved by Mary: because she knows that we have been purchased by the death of Jesus Christ. If a mother should see a servant redeemed by a beloved son of hers, by twenty years of imprisonment and suffering, for this reason alone how much would she esteem that servant! Mary well knows that her Son came upon earth solely to save us miserable sinners, as he himself declared: "I have come to save what was lost."† And to save us he has consented to lay down his life for us: "Becoming obedient unto death."‡ If Mary, then, had little love for us, she would slightly value the blood of her Son, which was the price of our salvation. It was revealed to St. Elizabeth, the nun, that Mary, from the time she was in the temple, was always praying that God would quickly send his Son to save the world. Now, how much more

* Nulla post eam creatura ita per amorem nostrum exardescet, quæ filium suum unicum, quem multo plus se amavit, nobis dedit, et pro nobis obtulit.

† Veni salvum facere, quod perierat. Luc. xix. 10.

‡ Factus obediens usque ad mortem. Phil. ii. 8.

certainly must we believe that she loves us, after she has seen us so greatly prized by her Son, that he deigned to purchase us at such a cost!

And because all men have been redeemed by Jesus, Mary loves and favors all. She was seen by St. John clothed with the sun: "And there appeared a great wonder in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun."* She is said to be clothed with the sun, because, as "There is no one that can hide himself from his heat," † so there is no one living on the earth who is deprived of the love of Mary. From the heat of the sun, as it is explained by the venerable Raymond Jordan, who through humility called himself the Idiot, that is, from the love of Mary. ‡ And who, says St. Anthony, can comprehend the care which this loving mother has of us all? Therefore, to all she offers and dispenses her mercy. § For our mother has desired the salvation of all, and has co-operated with her Son in the salvation of all.

It is certain that she is concerned for the whole human race, as St. Bernard affirms;‖ hence the practice of some devout servants of Mary is very useful, who, as Cornelius à Lapide relates, have the habit of praying our Lord to grant

* Et signum magnum apparuit in cœlo, mulier amicta sole. Apoc. xii. 1.

† Non est qui se abscondet a calore ejus. Psal. xviii. 7.

‡ A calore ejus, idest a dilectione Mariæ.

§ Oh quanta cura est Virgini matri de nobis! Omnibus aperit sinum misericordiæ suæ.

‖ Constat pro universo genere humano fuisse solicitam. Ho. 2, Mis.

them those graces which the blessed Virgin is seeking for them, using these words: "Oh Lord, give me what the most holy Virgin Mary is asking for me."* And this is well, as à Lapide adds, for our mother desires greater things for us than we think of asking for ourselves.† The devout Bernardine de Bustis says, that Mary is more desirous to do us good, and bestow favors upon us, than we are to receive them.‡ Therefore blessed Albertus Magnus applies to Mary the words of wisdom: "She preventeth them that covet her, so that she first showeth herself unto them." § So great is the love, says Richard of St. Laurence, which this good mother bears us, that when she perceives our necessities, she comes to relieve them. She hastens before she is invoked.‖

If Mary, then, is good to all, even to the ungrateful and negligent, who have but little love for her, and seldom have recourse to her, how much more loving must she not be to those who love her and often invoke her! "She is easily seen by them that love her." ¶ Oh, how easy it is, exclaims the same blessed Albertus, for those who love Mary to find her, and find her full of love and pity! "I love them that love

* Domine, da mihi, quod pro me postulat Ss. Virgo Maria.

† Ipsa enim majora optat, quam nos optare possumus.

‡ Plus ipsa desiderat facere tibi bonum, et largiri gratiam quam tu accipere concupiscas. Mar. 1, Serm. 5.

§ Præoccupat qui se concupiscunt, ut illis se prior ostendat Sap. vi. 14.

‖ Prius occurrit, quam invocetur. Ric. in Cant. iv. 5.

¶ Facile invenitur ab his qui diligunt illam. Sap. vi. 13.

me,"*she assures us, and declares that she cannot but love those who love her. And although our most loving lady loves all men as her children, yet, says St. Bernard, she recognizes and loves especially those who most tenderly love her. Those happy lovers of Mary, as the Idiot asserts, are not only loved, but served by her.†

Leonard the Dominican, as we read in the chronicles of his order, who was accustomed to recommend himself two hundred times a day to this mother of mercy, when he was on his death-bed, saw one beautiful as a queen by his side, who said to him: "Leonard, do you wish to die and come to my Son and me?" "Who are you?" answered the religious. "I am the mother of mercy," replied the Virgin; "you have many times invoked me, and now I come to take you: let us go to paradise." On that same day Leonard died, and we hope that he followed her to the kingdom of the blessed.

"Ah, most sweet Mary, blessed is he who loves you!" the venerable brother John Berchmans, of the society of Jesus, used to say: "If I love Mary, I am sure of perseverance, and I shall obtain from God whatsoever I wish." And this devout youth was never satisfied with renewing his intention, and often repeated to himself: "I will love Mary, I will love Mary."

* Ego diligentes me diligo. Prov. viii. 17.

† Inventa Maria Virgine, invenitur omne bonum. Ipsa namque diligit diligentes se, immo sibi servientibus servit. De contempl. Virgin. in Prolog.

Oh, how much this our good mother exceeds all her children in affection, even if they love her to the extent of their power! "Mary is always more loving than her lovers," says St. Ignatius, martyr.* Let us love her as much as St. Stanislaus Kostka, who loved this his dear mother so tenderly, that when he spoke of her, every one who heard him desired to love her also; he invented new titles by which he honored her name; he never commenced an action without first turning to her image and asking her blessing; when he recited her office, her rosary, and other prayers, he repeated them with such affectionate earnestness, that he seemed speaking face to face with Mary; when he heard the Salve Regina sung, his soul and even his countenance was all on fire; when asked one day by a father of the society, as they were going together to visit an altar of the blessed Virgin, how much he loved her, "Father," he answered, "what can I say more than she is my mother?" And that father tells us how the holy youth spoke these words with such tender emotion of voice, countenance, and heart, that he appeared not a man, but an angel discoursing the love of Mary.

Let us love her as much as blessed Hermann, who called her his beloved spouse, whilst he also was honored by Mary with the same name. As much as St. Philip Neri, who felt wholly consoled in merely thinking of Mary, and on this

* Semper Maria cum amantibus est amantior. Ep. ad., Ep. aur.

account named her his delight. As much as St. Bonaventure, who not only called her his lady and mother, but, to show the tender affection he bore her, went so far as to call her his heart and his soul: "Hail, lady, my mother; yea, my heart, my soul."* Let us love her as much as her great lover St. Bernard, who loved his sweet mother so much, that he called her "the ravisher of hearts:" † whence the saint, in order to express to her the ardent love he bore her, said to her, "Hast thou not stolen my heart?" ‡ Let us name her our beloved mistress, as St. Bernardine of Sienna named her, who went every day to visit her before her sacred image, in order to declare his love in the tender colloquies he held with his queen. When he was asked where he went every day, he answered that he went to find his beloved. Let them love her as much as St. Louis of Gonzaga, who burned continually with so great love of Mary, that as soon as he heard the sound of the sweet name of his dear mother, his heart kindled, and a flame perceptible to all, lighted up his countenance. Let us love her like St. Francis Solano, who, distracted by a holy passion for Mary, sometimes went with a musical instrument to sing of love before her altar, saying that, like earthly lovers, he was serenading his beloved queen.

* Ave Domina, mater mea; imo cor meum, anima mea.
† Raptrix cordium.
‡ Nonne rapuisti cor meum?

Let us love her as so many of her servants have loved her, who had no way left of manifesting their love to her. Father Jerome of Trexo, of the Society of Jesus, delighted in calling himself the slave of Mary, and as a mark of his servitude went often to visit her in a church: and what did he do there? He watered the church with the tears of that tender love which he felt for Mary; then he wiped them with his lips, kissing that pavement a thousand times, remembering that it was the house of his beloved mistress. Father Diego Martinez, of the same society, who, on account of his devotion to our Lady, on the feasts of Mary, was carried by angels to heaven, that he might see with how much devotion they were celebrated there, said, 'Would that I had all the hearts of the angels and the saints to love Mary as they love her. Would that I had the lives of all men, to devote them all to the love of Mary!" Let others love her as Charles the son of St. Bridget loved her, who said that he knew of nothing in the world which gave him so much consolation as the thought of how much Mary was beloved by God; and he added, that he would accept every suffering rather than that Mary should lose, if it were possible for her to lose it, the least portion of her greatness; and if the greatness of Mary were his, he would renounce it in her behalf, because she was more worthy of it. Let us desire to sacrifice our life in testimony of our love to Mary, as Alphonso Rodriguez desired to do. Let us, like Francesco

Binanzio, a religious, and Radagunde, wife of King Clotaire, engrave with sharp instruments of iron upon our breast the sweet name of Mary. Let us, with red-hot iron, impress upon our flesh the beloved name, that it may be more distinct and more enduring, as did her devoted servants Battista Archinto and Agostino d'Espinosa, both of the Company of Jesus.

If, then, the lovers of Mary imitate, as much as possible, those lovers who endeavor to make known their affection to the person beloved, they can never love her so much as she loves them. I know, oh Lady, said St. Peter Damian, how loving thou art, and that thou lovest us with unconquerable love.* The venerable Alphonso Rodriguez, of the Society of Jesus, was once standing before an image of Mary; and there burning with love for the most holy Virgin, broke forth into these words: "My most amiable mother, I know that thou lovest me, but thou dost not love me so much as I love thee." Then Mary, as if wounded in her love, spoke to him from that image and said: "What dost thou say—what dost thou say, oh Alphonso? Oh, how much greater is the love I bear thee than the love thou bearest me! Know that the distance from heaven to earth is not so great as from my love to thine."

With how much reason, then, did St. Bonaventure exclaim: Blessed are those whose lot it

* Scio, Domina, quia amantissima es et amas nos amore invincibili. Serm. 1, de Nat. B. V.

is to be faithful servants and lovers of this most loving mother!* For this most grateful queen is never surpassed in love by her devoted servants.† Mary, in this respect, imitating our loving Redeemer Jesus Christ, makes by her favors a twofold return to him who loves her. I will exclaim, then, with the enamored St. Anselm: May my heart languish, may my soul melt with your never-failing love.‡ May my heart always burn and my soul be consumed with love for you, oh Jesus, my beloved Saviour, oh my dear mother Mary. Grant then, oh Jesus and Mary, since without your grace I cannot love you, grant to my soul, not through my merits, but through yours, that I may love you as you deserve. Oh, God! the lover of men, thou hast died for thy enemies, and canst thou deny to him who asks it, the grace of loving thee and thy mother?§

EXAMPLE.

It is narrated by Father Auriemma,‖ that a poor shepherdess loved Mary so much that all her delight was to go to a little chapel of our

* Beati quorum corda diligunt Mariam! Beati qui ei famulantur!

† Nunquam in hoc certamine a nobis vincitur. Amorem redhibet, et præterita beneficia semper novis adauget. Paciucch. de B. Virg.

‡ Vestri continuo amore langueat cor meum, liquefiat anima mea. In Depr. ad V.

§ Date itaque supplicanti animæ meæ, non propter meritum meum sed propter meritum vestrum, date illi quantum digni estis amorem vestrum. Oh amator hominum, tu potuisti reos tuos usque ad mortem amare, et poteris roganti amorem tui et matris tuæ negare? Lec sit.

‖ Affett Scamb. tom. 2, cap. 7.

Lady, on a mountain, and there in solitude, while her sheep were feeding, to converse with her beloved mother and pay her devotion to her. When she saw that the figure of Mary, in relief, was unadorned, she began, by the poor labor of her hands, to make a drapery for it. Having gathered one day some flowers in the fields, she wove them into a garland, and then ascending the altar of that little chapel, placed it on the head of the figure, saying: "Oh, my mother, I would that I could place on thy head a crown of gold and gems; but as I am poor, receive from me this poor crown of flowers, and accept it as a token of the love I bear thee." Thus this devout maiden always endeavored to serve and honor her beloved Lady. But let us see how our good mother, on the other hand, rewarded the visits and the affection of her child. She fell ill, and was near her end. It happened that two religious passing that way, weary with travelling, stopped to rest under a tree; one fell asleep and the other watched, but both had the same vision. They saw a company of beautiful virgins, and among them there was one who, in loveliness and majesty, surpassed the rest. One of the brothers addressed her, and said: "Lady, who art thou? and where art thou going?" "I am the mother of God," she replied, "and I am going to the neighboring village, with these holy virgins, to visit a dying shepherdess, who has many times visited me." She spoke thus and disappeared. These two good servants of

God proposed to each other to go and visit her also. They went towards the place where the dying maiden lived, entered a small cottage, and there found her lying upon a little straw. They saluted her, and she said to them: "Brothers, ask of God that he may permit you to see the company that surrounds me." They were quickly on their knees, and saw Mary, with a crown in her hand by the side of the dying girl, consoling her. Then those holy virgins began to sing, and with that sweet music the blessed soul was released from the body. Mary crowned her, and took her soul with her to paradise.

PRAYER.

Oh Lady, Ravisher of hearts! I would exclaim with St. Bonaventure; who, with the love and favor thou dost bestow upon thy servants, dost ravish their hearts; take my miserable heart also, which desires so earnestly to love thee. Thou, oh my mother, with thy beauty hast enamored a God, and hast drawn him from heaven into thy bosom, and shall I live without loving thee? No. I will say to thee with thy loving child John Berchmans: "I will never rest until I have attained a tender love for my mother Mary."* No, I will not rest until I am certain of having obtained a love—a constant and tender love for thee, my mother, who hast loved me with so much tenderness even when I was so un-

* Nunquam quiescam, donec habuero tenerum amorem erga matrem meam Mariam.

grateful towards thee. And where should I now be if thou, oh Mary, hadst not loved me, and obtained so many favors for me? If then thou hast loved me so much when I did not love thee, how much more may I confide in thy goodness, now that I love thee? I love thee, oh my mother, and would wish for a heart capable of loving thee, for all those unhappy beings who do not love thee. Would that my tongue could praise thee with the power of a thousand tongues, in order to make known thy greatness, thy holiness, thy mercy, and thy love, with which thou lovest those who love thee. If I had riches, I would employ them all for thy honor; if I had subjects, I would make them all thy lovers; for thee and for thy glory I would give my life, if it were required. I love thee, oh my mother, but at the same time I fear that thou dost not love me, for I have heard that love makes lovers like those they love.* If then I find myself so unlike to thee, it is a proof that I do not love thee. Thou so pure, I so unclean; thou so humble, I so proud; thou so holy, I so sinful. But this, oh Mary, is to be thy work; since thou lovest me, make me like unto thyself. Thou hast the power to change the heart; take then mine and change it. Let the world see what thou canst do for those who love thee. Make me holy—make me worthy of thy Son. Thus I hope; thus may it be.

* Amor aut similes invenit, aut facit. Aristot.

SECTION IV.

MARY IS ALSO MOTHER OF PENITENT SINNERS.

MARY assured St. Bridget that she was mother not only of the just and innocent, but also of sinners, provided they wish to amend.* When a sinner becomes penitent, and throws himself at her feet, he finds this good mother of mercy more ready to embrace and aid him than any earthly mother could be. This St. Gregory wrote to the princess Matilda: "Desire to cease from sin, and I confidently promise you you will find Mary more prompt than an earthly mother in thy behalf."† But whoever aspires to be the son of this great mother, must first leave off sinning, and then let him hope to be accepted as her son. Richard, commenting upon the words, "Then rose up her children,"‡ remarks, that first comes the word rose up, *surrexerunt*, and then children, *filii;* because he cannot be a son of Mary who does not first rise from the iniquity into which he has fallen.§ For, says St. Peter Chrysologus, he who does works contrary to those of Mary, by such conduct denies that he wishes

* Ego sum quasi mater omnium peccatorum volentium se emendare. L. 4, Rev. c. 138.

† Pone finem a voluntate peccandi, et invenies Mariam—indubitanter promitto—promptiorem carnali matre in tui dilectione. L. 4, Ep. 47.

‡ Surrexerunt filii ejus. Prov. xxxi. 28.

§ Nec dignus est, qui in mortali peccato est, vocari filius tantæ matris.

to be her son.* Mary is humble, and will he be proud? Mary is pure, and will he be impure? Mary is full of love, and will he hate his neighbor? He proves that he is not, and does not wish to be the son of this holy mother, when he so much disgusts her with his life. The sons of Mary, repeats Richard of St. Laurence, are her imitators in chastity, humility, meekness, mercy.† And how can he who so much disgusts her with his life, dare to call himself the son of Mary? A certain sinner once said to Mary, "Show thyself a mother;"‡ but the Virgin answered him, "Show thyself a son."§ Another, one day, invoked this divine mother, calling her mother of mercy. But Mary said to him, "When you sinners wish me to aid you, you call me mother of mercy, and yet by your sins make me the mother of misery and grief." "He is cursed of God that angereth his mother."‖ His mother —that is, Mary, remarks Richard.¶ God curses every one who afflicts this his good mother, by his bad life or his wilfulness.

I have said wilfulness, for when a sinner, although he may not have left his sins, makes an effort to quit them, and seeks the aid of Mary, this mother will not fail to assist him, and bring him to the grace of God. This St. Brid-

* Qui genetricis non facit opera, negat genus.

† Filii Mariæ imitatores ejus, in castitate, humilitate, mansuetudine, misericordia.

‡ Monstra te esse matrem.

§ Monstra te esse filium. Ad. Aur.

‖ Maledictus a Deo qui exasperat matrem suam. Eccli. iii. 18.

¶ Matrem suam, idest Mariam.

get once learned from Jesus Christ himself, who, speaking with his mother, said: "Thou dost aid those who are striving to rise to God, and dost leave no soul without thy consolation."* While the sinner, then, is obstinate, Mary cannot love him; but if he finds himself enchained by some passion which makes him a slave of hell, and will commend himself to the Virgin, and implore her with confidence and perseverance to rescue him from his sin, this good mother will not fail to extend her powerful hand, she will loose his chains, and bring him to a state of safety. It is a heresy, condemned by the sacred Council of Trent, to say that all the prayers and works of a person in a state of sin are sins. St. Bernard says that prayer is the mouth of a sinner, although it is without supernatural excellence, since it is not accompanied by charity, yet is useful and efficient in obtaining a release from sin; for, as St. Thomas teaches,† the prayer of the sinner is indeed without merit, but it serves to obtain the grace of pardon; for the power of obtaining it is based not upon the worth of him who prays, but upon the divine bounty, and upon the merits and promise of Jesus Christ, who has said, "Every one that asketh receiveth." ‡ The same may be said of the prayers offered to the divine mother. If he who prays, says St. Anselm, does not deserve to

* Conanti surgere ad Deum tribuis auxilium, et neminem relinquis vacuum a tua consolatione.

† 2, 2, qu. 178, a. 2, ad 1.

‡ Omnis qui petit, accipit. Luc. xi. 10.

be heard, the merits of Mary, to whom he commends himself, will cause him to be heard.* Hence St. Bernard exhorts every sinner to pray to Mary, and to feel great confidence in praying to her; because if he does not deserve what he demands, yet Mary obtains for him, by her merits, the graces which she asks of God for him.† The office of a good mother, says the same saint, is this: if a mother knew that her two sons were deadly enemies, and that one was plotting against the life of the other, what would she do but endeavor in every way to pacify him? Thus, says the saint, Mary is mother of Jesus, and mother of man; when she sees any one by his sin an enemy of Jesus Christ, she cannot endure it, and makes every effort to reconcile them.‡ Our most indulgent lady only requires the sinner to commend himself to her, and have the intention to reform. When she sees a sinner coming to implore mercy at her feet, she does not regard the sins with which he is laden, but the intention with which he comes. If he comes with a good intention, though he have committed all the sins in the world, she embraces him, and this most loving mother condescends to heal all the wounds of his soul; for she is not

* Si merita invocantis non merentur, ut exaudiatur; merita tamen matris intercedunt, ut exaudiatur.

† Quia indignus erat, cui donaretur, datum est Mariæ, ut per illam acciperes quicquid haberes. Serm. 3, in Vig. Nat.

‡ Oh felix Maria, tu mater rei, tu mater judicis; cum sis mater utriusque, discordias inter tuos filios nequis sustinere. In Depr. ad V.

only called by us the mother of mercy, but she really is such, and shows herself such by the love and tenderness with which she succors us. The blessed Virgin herself expressed all this to St. Bridget, when she said to her, "However great may be a man's sins, when he turns to me, I am immediately ready to receive him; neither do I consider how much he has sinned, but with what intention he comes; for I do not disdain to anoint and heal his wounds, because I am called, and truly am, the mother of mercy."*

Mary is the mother of sinners who desire to be converted, and as a mother she cannot but compassionate them, and it even seems that she regards the woes of her poor children as her own. When the woman of Chanaan implored Jesus Christ to liberate her daughter from the demon which tormented her, she said: "Have mercy on me, oh Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously troubled by a devil."† But as the daughter, not the mother, was tormented by the devil, it would seem that she should have said, "Oh Lord, have mercy on my daughter," not "have mercy upon me;" but no, she said, "Have mercy upon me,"‡ and with reason, for all the miseries of children are felt as their own by their

* Quantumcumque homo peccat, statim parata sum recipere revertentem; nec attendo quantum peccaverit, sed cum quali intentione redit; nam non dedignor ejus plagas ungere, et sanare, quia vocor et vere sum mater misericordiæ. Rev. l. c. 23.

† Miserere mei. Domine Fili David, filia mea male a dæmonio vexatur. Matth. xv. 22.

‡ Miserere mei.

mothers. Exactly thus Mary prays God, says Richard of St. Laurence, when she commends to him a sinner who has recommended himself to her: "Have mercy upon me."* It is as if she said to him, My Lord, this poor creature, who is in sin, is my child; have pity on him, not so much on him as on me who am his mother. Oh, would to God that all sinners would have recourse to this sweet mother, for all would certainly be pardoned by God. Oh Mary, exclaims St. Bonaventure, in wonder; thou dost embrace, with maternal affection the sinner who is despised by the whole world! neither dost thou leave him until he is reconciled to his Judge!† The saint here intends to say that the sinner who remains in sin is hated and rejected by all men; even insensible creatures, fire, air, the earth would punish him, and inflict vengeance upon him in order to repair the honor of their insulted Lord. But if this wretch has recourse to Mary, does she banish him from her presence? No: if he comes asking for help, and intending to amend, she embraces him with the affection of a mother, and does not leave him until she has reconciled him to God by her powerful intercession, and re-established him in his grace.

We read in the 2d book of Kings,‡ that the

* Maria clamat pro anima peccatrice; miserere mei. De Laud. V n. 6.

† Oh Maria peccatorem toti mundo despectum, materno affectu complecteris! nec deseris, quousque miserum judici reconcilies. In spec. c. 5.

‡ C. xiv

wise woman of Thecua said to David: "My Lord, I had two sons, and for my misfortune one has killed the other; so that I have already lost a child; justice would now take from me my other and only son; have pity on me a poor mother, and do not let me be deprived of both my children." Then David had compassion on this mother, and liberated the criminal, and restored him to her.* It appears that Mary offers the same petition when God is angry with a sinner, who has recourse to her: Oh my God, she says to him, I had two sons, Jesus and man; man has killed my Jesus on the cross; thy justice would now condemn man; my Lord, my Jesus is dead; have mercy upon me, and if I have lost one, do not condemn me to lose the other also. Ah, God assuredly does not condemn those sinners who have recourse to Mary, and for whom she prays; since God himself has given these sinners to Mary for her children. The devout Lanspergius puts these words into the mouth of our Lord: I have commended sinners to Mary as her children. Wherefore she is so watchful in the performance of her office that she permits none to be lost who are committed to her care, especially those who invoke her, and uses all her power to lead them back to me. And who can describe, says Blosius, the goodness, the mercy,

* Mariæ peccatores in filios commendavi, propterea adeo est sedula, ut, officio suo satisfaciens neminem eorum, qui sibi commissi sunt, præcipue illam invocantium, perire sinat, sed quantum valet, omnes mihi reducat. V. 1. 4, Min. Op.

the fidelity, and the charity with which this our mother strives to save us, when we invoke her aid?* Let us prostrate ourselves, then, says St. Bernard, before this good mother, let us cling to her sacred feet, and leave her not until she gives us her blessing, and accepts us for her children.† Who could distrust the goodness of this mother? said St. Bonaventure. Though she should slay me, I will hope in her; and, confident in my trust, I would die near her image, and be saved.‡ And thus should every sinner say who has recourse to this kind mother: Oh my Lady and mother, I deserve for my faults that thou shouldst banish me from thy presence, and shouldst punish me for my sins; but even if thou shouldst cast me off and slay me, I shall never lose confidence in thee and in thy power to save me. In thee I entirely confide, and if it be my fate to die before some image of thine, recommending myself to thy compassion, I should have a certain hope of my salvation, and of going to praise thee in heaven, united to all thy servants who called upon thee for aid in death, and are saved. Let the following example be read, and let the reader judge if any sinner can distrust the mercy and love of this good mother, if he has recourse to her.

* Hujus matris bonitas, misericordia, fidelitas, charitas erga homines tanta est ut nullis verbis explicari possit.

† Beatis illius pedibus persolvamur; teneamus eam, nec dimittamus donec benedixerit nes. In Sign. Mag.

‡ Etiamsi occiderit me, sperabo in eum; et tutus confidens juxta ejus imaginem mori desidero, et salvus ero.

EXAMPLE.

It is narrated by Belluacensis that in Ridolio, a city of England, in the year 1430, there lived a young nobleman named Ernest, who gave all his patrimony to the poor, and entered a monastery, where he led so holy a life that he was greatly esteemed by his superiors, particularly for his special devotion to the most holy Virgin. It happened that a pestilence prevailed in that city and the citizens had recourse to that monastery to ask the prayers of the monks. The abbot ordered Ernest to go and pray before the altar of Mary, and not to quit it until she had given him an answer. The youth remained there three days, and received from Mary, in answer, some prayers, which were to be said. They were said, and the plague ceased. It happened afterwards that this youth became less ardent in his devotion to Mary; the devil assailed him with many temptations, especially to impurity, and to a desire to flee from the monastery; and having neglected to recommend himself to Mary, he resolved to take flight by casting himself from the wall of the monastery; but passing before an image of the Virgin which stood in the corridor, the mother of God spoke to him, and said: "My son, why do you leave me?" Ernest was overwhelmed with surprise, and, filled with compunction, fell on the earth, saying: "My Lady, behold, I have no power to resist, why do you not aid me?" and the Madonna replied: "Why

have you not invoked me? If you had sought my protection, you would not have been reduced to this; from this day commend yourself to me, and have confidence." Ernest returned to his cell; but the temptations were renewed, yet he neglected to call upon Mary for assistance. He finally fled from the monastery, and leading a bad life, he went on from one sin to another, till he became an assassin. He rented an inn, where in the night he murdered unfortunate travellers and stripped them of all they had. One night, among others, he killed the cousin of the governor of the place, who, after examination and trial, condemned him to the gallows. But during the examination, a young traveller arrived at the inn, and the host, as usual, laid his plans and entered his chamber to assassinate him: but on approaching the bed, he finds the young man gone and a Christ on the cross, covered with wounds, in his place. Our Lord, looking compassionately at him, said: "Is it not enough that I have died once for thee? Dost thou wish to slay me again? Do it, then; lift thy hand and kill me!" Then the poor Ernest, covered with confusion, began to weep, and exclaimed: "Oh Lord, behold me ready to return to thee, who hast shown me so much mercy." He immediately left the inn to go back to the monastery and do penance; but the officers of justice overtook him on the way, he was carried before the judge, and in his presence confessed all the murders he had committed. He was at once condemned to death,

without even being allowed time for confession. He commended himself to Mary. He was hung upon the gallows, but the Virgin prevented his death. She herself released him, and said to him: "Return to the monastery; do penance; and when you shall see in my hand a paper containing the pardon of thy sins, then prepare to die. Ernest returned, and having related all to the abbot, did great penance. After many years, he saw in the hand of Mary the paper containing his pardon; he then prepared for his last end, and died a holy death.

PRAYER.

Oh Mary, sovereign queen, and worthy mother of my God, most holy Mary! Finding myself so vile, so laden with sin, I dare not approach thee and call thee mother. But I cannot let my miseries deprive me of the consolation and confidence I feel in calling thee mother. I know that I deserve to be rejected by thee, but I pray thee to consider what thy son Jesus has done and suffered for me; and then cast me from thee if thou canst. I am a poor sinner, who, more than others, have despised the divine Majesty; but the evil is already done. To thee I have recourse: thou canst help me; oh, my mother, help me. Do not say that thou canst not aid me, for I know that thou art omnipotent, and dost obtain whatever thou desireth from thy God. If then thou sayest that thou canst not help me, at least

tell me to whom I must have recourse for succor in my deep distress. With St. Anselm, I will say to thee, and to thy Son: Have pity on me, oh thou, my Redeemer, and pardon me, thou my mother, and recommend me to pardon; or teach me to whom I may have recourse, who is more compassionate than you, and in whom I may have more confidence. No, neither in heaven nor on earth can I find one who has more compassion for the miserable, or who can aid me more than you. Thou, oh Jesus, art my father, and thou, oh Mary, art my mother. You love those who are the most wretched, and you seek to save them. I am worthy of hell, and of all beings the most miserable; you need not to seek me, neither do I ask you to seek me; I present myself to you with a sure hope that I shall not be abandoned by you. Behold me at your feet; my Jesus, pardon me; my Mary, help me.

CHAPTER II.

VITA, DULCEDO.

Our life, our sweetness.

SECTION I.

MARY IS OUR LIFE, BECAUSE SHE OBTAINS FOR US THE PARDON OF OUR SINS.

In order to understand rightly the reason why the holy Church calls Mary our life, we must consider that as the soul gives life to the body, so divine grace gives life to the soul; for a soul without grace, though nominally alive, in truth is dead, as we find in the Apocalypse: "Thou hast the name of being alive, and thou art dead."* As Mary, then, obtains for sinners, by her intercession, the gift of grace, she restores them to life. The holy Church applies to her the following words of Proverbs: "They that in the morning early watch for me, shall find me."† They shall find me, or, according to the Septuagint, "they shall find grace."‡ Hence, to have recourse to Mary is to find the grace of God; for, as immediately follows: "He who finds me shall

* Nomen habes quod vivas, et mortuus es. Apoc. iii. 1.
† Qui mane vigilant ad me, invenient me. Prov. viii. 17.
‡ Invenient me, invenient gratiam.

find life, and shall receive from God eternal salvation."* Listen, as St. Bonaventure exclaims here upon these words, listen, all ye who desire the kingdom of God ; honor the Virgin Mary, and ye shall have life and eternal salvation.†

St. Bernardine of Sienna says, that God did not destroy man after his fall, because of the peculiar love that he bore his future child Mary. And the saint adds, that he doubts not all the mercy and pardon which sinners receive under the Old Law, was granted them by God solely for the sake of this blessed Virgin. ‡

Therefore St. Bernard exhorts us, if we have been so unfortunate as to lose divine grace, to strive to recover it, but to strive through Mary; for if we have lost it, she has found it:§ and hence she is called by this saint, "The finder of grace."‖ This the angel Gabriel expressed for our consolation, when he said to the Virgin, "Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace."¶ But if Mary had never been without grace, how could the angel say to her that she had found it? A thing is said to be found when it has been lost. The Virgin was always with God and with grace; she was even full of grace, as the Archangel himself

* Qui me invenerit, inveniet vitam, et hauriet salutem a Domino.

† Audite, audite qui cupitis regnum Dei; Virginem Mariam honorate, et invenietis vitam et salutem eternam.

‡ Omnes indulgentias factas in Veteri Testamento non ambigo Deum fecisse solum propter hujus benedictæ puellæ Virginis reverentiam, et amorem. Tom. 4, serm. 61, c. 8.

§ Quæramus gratiam, et per Mariam quæramus. Serm. de aquæd.

‖ Inventrix gratiæ.

¶ Ne timeas Maria, invenisti gratiam. Luc. i. 30.

announced when he saluted her, "Hail! full of grace, the Lord is with thee."* If, then, Mary did not find grace for herself, for whom did she find it? Cardinal Hugo answers, when commenting upon the above passage, that she found it for sinners who had lost it. Let sinners, then, says the devout writer, who have lost grace, flee to Mary; with her they will certainly find it; and let them say: Oh Lady, what is lost must be restored to him who has lost it; this grace which thou hast found is not thine, thou hast never lost it; it is ours, for we have lost it, and to us thou shouldst restore it.† In connection with which, Richard of St. Laurence remarks: If then we desire to find the grace of God, let us go to Mary, who has found it, and always finds it.‡ And since she ever has been, and ever will be, dear to God, if we have recourse to her, we certainly shall find it. She says, in the holy Canticles, that God has placed her in the world to be our defence,§ and therefore she is ordained to be the mediatrix of peace between the sinner and God. "I am become in his presence as one finding peace."* By which words St. Bernard gives encouragement to the sinner, and says: Go to

* Ave gratia plena, Dominus tecum.

† Currant ergo, currant peccatores ad Virginem qui gratiam amiserant peccando, et eam invenient apud ipsam. Secum dicant; Redde nobis rem nostram, quam invenisti.

‡ Cupientes invenire gratiam quæramus inventricem gratiæ, quæ, quia semper invenit frustrari non poterit. De Laud. V. l. 2.

§ Ego murus et ubera mea sicut turris. Cant. viii. 10.

* Ex quo facta sum coram eo quasi pacem reperiens. Cant. viii. 10.

this mother of mercy, and show her the wounds which thy sins have inflicted upon thy soul. Then she will certainly pray her Son that he may pardon thee by the milk with which she has nourished him, and the Son who loves her so much will certainly hear her.* So, too, the holy Churchteaches us to pray the Lord to grant us the powerful intercession of Mary, that we may arise from our sins, in the following prayer: "Grant us, oh merciful God! strength against all our weakness; that we who celebrate the memory of the holy mother of God, may, by the help of her intercession, arise again from our iniquities."†

Justly, then, does St. Lawrence Justinian call her the hope of evil-doers, "spes delinquentium," since she alone can obtain their pardon from God. St. Bernard rightly names her the ladder of sinners, "Peccatorum scala;" since she, this compassionate queen, offers her hand to poor fallen mortals, leads them from the precipice of sin, and helps them to ascend to God. St. Augustine rightly calls her the only hope of us sinners, since by her means alone we hope for the remission of all our sins.‡ And St. John Chrysostom reveats the same thing, namely, that sinners

* Vade ad matrem misericordiæ, et ostende illi tuorum plagas peccatorum; et ita ostendet pro te ubera. Exaudiet utique matrem filius.

† Concede, misericors Deus, fragilitati nostræ præsidium; ut qui sanctæ Dei Genitricis memoriam agimus, intercessionis ejus auxilio a nostris iniquitatibus resurgamus.

‡ Tu es spes unica peccatorum, quia, per te speramus veniam omnium delictorum. Serm. 18, de Sanctis.

receive pardon only through the intercession of Mary.* Whence the saints in the name of all sinners thus salutes her: Hail! mother of God and ours; Heaven where God dwells; Throne from which the Lord dispenses all graces; always pray to Jesus for us, that by thy prayers we may obtain pardon in the day of account, and the glory of the blessed in heaven.† Finally, Mary is rightly called aurora: "Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising? "‡ Because, as Pope Innocent says, aurora is the end of night, and the beginning of day, well is the Virgin Mary, who is the end of vices and the beginning of virtues, designated as aurora.§ And the same effect which the birth of Mary produced in the world, devotion to her produces in the soul; she puts an end to the night of sin, and leads the soul into the way of virtue. Hence, St. Germanus says: Oh mother of God, thy protection is immortal! thy intercession is life.‖ And in his sermon on the *Zone of the Virgin*,¶ the saint says that the name of Mary, to him

* Per hanc peccatorum veniam consequimur.

† Ave igitur mater, Cœlum, Thronus, Ecclesiæ nostræ Decus; assidue precare Jesum, ut per te misericordiam invenire in die judicii, et quæ reposita sunt iis qui diligunt Deum bona consequi possimus. In Offic. Nat. B. M., die 5.

‡ Quæ est ista, quæ progreditur quasi aurora consurgens? Cant. vi. 9.

§ Cum aurora sit finis noctis, et origo diei, vere per auroram designatur Maria Virgo, quæ fuit finis vitiorum, et origo virtutum. Serm. 2. de Ass. B. V.

‖ Serm. 3, in Dorm. B. V.

¶ De Zona Virgin.

who pronounces it with affection, is either the sign of life, or that soon he will have life.

Mary sang: "For behold, from henceforth all nations shall call me blessed."* On this account, says St. Bernard, all nations shall call thee blessed, because all thy servants by thy means shall obtain the life of grace and eternal glory.† "In thee sinners find pardon, and the just perseverance, and afterwards life eternal." ‡ Do not despair, as the devout Bernardine de Bustis says, oh sinners, although you have committed all possible sin, but confidently have recourse to this Lady, for you will find her hands full of mercies. Then she adds: Mary is more desirous to bestow favors upon you than you are to receive them.§

By St. Andrew of Crete, Mary is called "The security of divine pardon."‖ By this is meant, that when sinners have recourse to Mary that they may be reconciled to God, God assures them of pardon, and gives them the assurance by also giving them the pledge of it. And this pledge is Mary, whom he has given us for our advocate,

* Ecce enim ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes generationes. Luc. i. 48.

† Ex hoc beatam te dicent omnes generationes, quæ omnibus generationibus vitam et gloriam genuisti. Serm. 2, in Pentec.

‡ In te peccatores veniam, justi gratiam inveniunt in eternum. Serm. de Nat. B. V.

§ O peccator ne diffidas etiamsi commisisti omnia peccata; sed secure ad istam gloriosissimam Dominam recurras. Invenies eam in manibus plenam misericordia, et largitate; plus enim ipsa desiderat facere tibi bonum, et largiri gratiam, quam tu acciperi concupiscas. Serm. 5, de N. M.

‖ Fidejussio divinarum reconciliationum, quæ dato pignore fit.

by whose intercession, in virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, God pardons all sinners who place themselves under her protection. It was revealed to St. Bridget by an angel, that the holy prophets were full of joy when they learned that God, by the humility and purity of Mary, would become reconciled to sinners, and receive into his favor those who had provoked his wrath.*

No sinner need ever fear that he shall be rejected by Mary, if he has recourse to her mercy. No, for she is mother of mercy; and as such, desires to save the most miserable. Mary is that happy ark in which he who takes refuge will never suffer the shipwreck of eternal ruin; "arca in qua naufragium evadimus." Even the brutes were saved in the time of the deluge in the ark of Noe; so, under the mantle of Mary, even sinners are saved. St. Gertrude one day saw Mary with her mantle extended, beneath which many wild beasts, lions, bears, and tigers had sheltered themselves; and Mary not only did not cast them from her, but received them with pity and caressed them. And by this the saint understood, that the vilest sinners, when they flee to Mary, are not cast out, but welcomed and saved from eternal death. Let us enter, then, into this ark, and seek refuge under the mantle of Mary; for she certainly will not reject us, and will surely save us.

* Exultabant autem prænoscentes, quod ipse Dominus ex tua humilitate et vitæ puritate, O Maria stella præfulgida, placaretur, et quod reciperet eos in suam gratiam, qui ipsum ad iracundiam provocaverunt. Serm. Ang. c. 9.

EXAMPLE.

It is narrated by Father Bevius,* of a very sinful person named Helen, that having gone to church, she accidentally heard a sermon on the rosary. As she went out she bought one but carried it hidden, so that it should not be seen. Afterwards, she began to recite it; and although she recited it without devotion, the most holy Virgin infused into her heart such consolation and sweetness in it, that she could not cease repeating it. And by this she was inspired with such a horror of her evil life, that she could find no peace, and was forced, as it were, to go to confession. She confessed with so much contrition, that the confessor was amazed. Having finished her confession, she went immediately before an altar of the blessed Virgin, to thank her advocate; she recited her rosary, and the divine mother spoke to her from her image, and said: "Helen, you have too long offended God and me; henceforth change your life, and I will bestow upon you many of my favors." The poor sinner in confusion, answered: "Ah, most holy Virgin, it is true that hitherto I have been very sinful, but thou, who art all-powerful, assist me; I give myself to thee, and will pass the remainder of my life in doing penance for my sins." Assisted by Mary, Helen bestowed all her goods upon the poor, and commenced a rigorous penance. She was tormented by dreadful temptations, but she

* Ex della SS. Virg.

continued to recommend herself to the mother of God; and always, with her aid, came off victorious. She was favored also with many supernatural graces, as visions, revelations, and prophecies. At last, before her death, of which she had been warned a few days previously by Mary, the Virgin herself came with her Son to visit her; and in death, the soul of this sinner was seen, in the form of a beautiful dove, ascending to heaven.

PRAYER.

Behold, oh mother of my God, Mary, my only hope, behold at thy feet a miserable sinner, who implores thy mercy. Thou art proclaimed and called by the whole Church, and by all the faithful, the refuge of sinners; thou then art my refuge; it is thine to save me. Thou knowest how much thy Son desires our salvation.* Thou, too, knowest what Jesus Christ suffered to save me. I offer to thee, oh my mother, the sufferings of Jesus; the cold which he endured in the stable, the steps of his long journey into Egypt, his toils, his sweat, the blood that he shed, the torments which caused his death before thy eyes upon the cross; show thy love for this Son, whilst I, for the love of him, beg thee to aid me. Extend thy hand to a fallen creature, who asks pity of thee. If I were a saint, I would not ask for mercy; but because I am a sinner, I have recourse

* Scis dulcissima Dei mater, quantum placeat benedicto filio tuo salus nostra. Guill. Paris.

to thee, who art the mother of mercies. I know that thy compassionate heart finds consolation in succoring the wretched, when thou canst aid them, and dost not find them obstinate in their sins. Console, then, to-day thy own compassionate heart, and console me; for thou hast a chance to save me, a poor wretch condemned to hell; and thou canst aid me, for I will not be obstinate. I place myself in thy hands; tell me what I must do, and obtain for me strength to do it, and I will do all I can to return to a state of grace. I take refuge beneath thy mantle. Jesus Christ wishes me to have recourse to thee, that, for thy glory and his, since thou art his mother, not only his blood, but also thy prayers, may aid me to obtain salvation. He sends me to thee that thou mayest assist me. Oh Mary, I hasten to thee, and in thee I trust. Thou dost pray for so many others, pray, and say also one word for me. Say to God, that thou desirest my salvation, and God certainly will save me. Tell him that I am thine; this is all I ask from thee.

SECTION II.

MARY IS AGAIN OUR LIFE, BECAUSE SHE OBTAINS FOR US PERSEVERANCE.

FINAL perseverance is a divine gift so great, that, as the holy Council of Trent has declared, it is a wholly gratuitous gift and one that cannot be merited by us. But, as St. Augustine teaches us, all those obtain perseverance from

God who ask it of him; and as Father Suarez says, they infallibly obtain it if they are diligent to the end of life in praying for it; because, as Cardinal Bellarmine writes: This perseverance is daily to be sought, that it may be daily obtained.* Now, if it is true, which I consider certain, according to the present very general opinion, as I shall presently demonstrate in chap. 5th—if it is true that all the graces which are bestowed on us by God pass through the hands of Mary, it must also be true that only through Mary can we hope for and obtain this great gift of perseverance. And we certainly shall obtain it, if, with confidence, we always ask it of Mary. She herself promises this grace to all those who serve her faithfully in this life. "They that work by me shall not sin; they that explain me shall have life everlasting:" † which words the holy Church puts into the mouth of Mary on the Feast of her Conception.

In order that we may be preserved in the life of divine grace, spiritual strength is necessary to resist all the enemies of our salvation. Now, this strength can only be obtained by means of Mary: Mine is this strength, says Mary: "Mea est fortitudo." God has intrusted this gift to my hand, that I may bestow it on my devoted servants. "By me kings reign:" "Per

* Quotidie petenda est, ut quotidie obtineatur.

† Qui operantur in me, non peccabunt; qui elucidant me, vitam æternam habebunt. Eccli. xxiv. 30, 31.

‡ Prov. viii. 15. In Festo S. Mariæ ad nives.

me rege regnant."‡ By me my servants reign, and rule their senses and their passions, and thus make themselves worthy of reigning eternally in heaven. Oh, what strength have the servants of this great Lady to conquer all the temptations of hell! Mary is that tower spoken, of in the holy Canticles: "Thy neck is as the tower of David, which is built with bulwarks a thousand bucklers hang upon it, all the armor of valiant men."* She is like a strong tower of defence for her lovers, who take refuge with her in the day of battle; in her all her devoted servants find shields and weapons of every kind to defend themselves against the powers of hell.

For this reason, the most holy Virgin is called a plane-tree: "As a plane-tree by the water in the streets was I exalted." † This passage is explained by Cardinal Hugo, who tells us that the plane-tree has leaves like shields.‡ And by this is explained the defence that Mary affords those who take refuge with her. The blessed Amadeus gives another explanation, and says that she is called a plane-tree, because, as the plane-tree, with its shade, protects the traveller from the heat of the sun and from the rain, so,

* Sicut turris David collum tuum, quæ edificata est cum propugnaculis; mille clypei pendent ex ea, omnis armatura fortium. Cant. iv. 4.

† Quasi platanus exaltata sum juxta aquam in plateis. Eccli. xxiv. 19.

‡ Platanus habet folia scutis similia.

under the mantle of Mary, men find shelter from the heat of their passions and the fury of temptations.*

Unfortunate are those souls who withdraw from this shelter, neglect their devotion to Mary, and fail to recommend themselves to her in trial. If the sun should no more rise upon the world, says St. Bernard, what would the world become but a chaos of darkness and horror?† If a soul loses her devotion to Mary, she will immediately be full of darkness, and that darkness of which the Holy Ghost says: "Thou hast appointed darkness, and it is night; in it shall the beasts of the woods go about."‡ When the divine light does not shine in a soul it is night, and it will become a den of all sins and demons. Woe to those, as St. Anselm says, who turn away from the light of this sun;§ that is, who neglect devotion to Mary. St. Francis Borgia, with reason, feared for the perseverance of those in whom he did not find a special devotion to the blessed Virgin. When once he asked some novices to what saint they had the most devotion, and found that some of them were not especially devoted to Mary, he warned the master to watch more carefully these unfortunate persons;

* Virgo ramorum extensione se ubique expandit, ut filios Adæ ab æstu et turbine umbra desiderabili protegeret. B. Am. Hom. 8.

† Tolle corpus hoc solare, ubi dies? Tolle Mariam, quid, nisi tenebræ relinquentur? Serm. de Aquæd.

‡ Posuisti tenebras, et facta est nox; in ipsa pertransibunt omnes bestiæ sylvæ. Psal. ciii. 20.

§ Væ væ eis qui solem istum aversantur!

and it happened that they all lost their vocation and quitted religion.

St. Germanus justly called the most holy Virgin the breath of Christians; because, as the body cannot live without breathing, so the soul cannot live without having recourse and commending itself to Mary, through whose means the life of divine grace is obtained for us and preserved in us.* As respiration is not only the sign, but also the cause of life, so is the name of Mary, when it is spoken by the servants of God, not only proves that they are living, but procures and maintains this life, and obtains for them every aid. The blessed Alanus, when once assailed by a strong temptation, was on the point of being lost because he omitted to recommend himself to Mary; but the blessed Virgin appeared to him, and, to warn him against such neglect in future, gave him a blow on the ear, and said to him: "If thou hadst commended thyself to me, thou wouldst not have been exposed to this peril."

On the other hand: "Blessed is the man," says Mary, "that heareth me, and that watcheth daily at my gates, and waiteth at the posts of my doors."† Mary will certainly be ready to obtain light and strength for those faithful servants,

* Sicut respiratio non solum est signum vitæ, sed etiam causa; sic Mariæ nomen, quod in servorum Dei ore versatur, simul argumentum est quod vere vivant, simul etiam hanc vitam efficit et conservat; omnemque eis opem impertitur. Orat. de Deip.

† Beatus homo qui audit me, qui vigilat ad fores meas quotidie, et observat ad postes ostii mei. Prov. viii. 34. In Festo Conc. B. V. M.

that they may abandon their vices and walk in the paths of virtue. Hence is she, as Innocent III. beautifully expresses it: The moon by night, the dawn of the morning, and the sun by day.* The moon, to him who is groping in the night of sin, to give him light to see his wretched state of condemnation; the dawn, the forerunner of the sun, to him who is enlightened, that he may come forth from sin and return to divine grace; and the sun, to him who is in grace, that he may not again fall into any precipice.

Theologians apply to Mary these words of Ecclesiasticus: "Her bands are a healthful binding."† Wherefore are they called bands, asks St. Lawrence Justinian, unless because she binds her servants, that they may not wander in forbidden fields?‡ St. Bonaventure explains in a similar manner the words of the office of Mary: My abode is in the full assembly of saints."§ He says that Mary is not only established in the fulness of the saints, but that she also upholds the saints, that they may not fall away; she sustains their virtue that it may not waver, and prevents the demons from doing them harm.‖

It is said that "all her domestics are clothed

* Luna in nocte, aurora in diluculo, sol in die. Serm. 2, de Ass.

† Vincula illius alligatura salutaris. Eccli. vi. 31.

‡ Quare vinculæ? nisi quia servos ligat, ne discurrant per campos licentiæ.

§ In plenitudine sanctorum detentio mea. Eccli. xxiv. 16.

‖ Ipsa quoque non solum in plenitudine sanctorum detinetur, sed etiam in plenitudine sanctos detinet, ne eorum plenitudo minuatur, detinet nimirum virtutes, ne fugiant; detinet demonos, ne noceant. In spec.

with double garments." * Cornelius à Lapide thus describes this double garment: It is a double garment, because she clothes her servants with the virtues of her Son, as well as with her own; † and, thus clothed, they will preserve holy perseverance. For this reason, St. Philip Neri always admonished his penitents by saying to them: My children, if you desire perseverance, be devout to Mary. The venerable brother John Berchmans, of the Company of Jesus, also said: He who loves Mary, shall have perseverance. The reflection which Rupert the abbot makes upon the prodigal son is very beautiful. If the mother of this prodigal son had been living, he would either never have left his father's house or would have returned much sooner.‡ And by this he wished to say, that he who is a child of Mary, either never departs from God, or if for his misfortune he departs, by means of Mary he quickly returns.

Oh, if all men loved this most kind and loving Lady, and in temptations always and immediately had recourse to her, who would fall? Who would be lost? He falls and is lost who does not flee to Mary. St. Lawrence Justinian applies to Mary these words of Ecclesiasticus: "I have walked in the waves of the sea;" § and

* Omnes domestici ejus vestiti sunt duplicibus. Prov. xxxi. 21.

† Duplici veste ipsa ornat sibi devotos, quia tam Christi quam suis virtutibus eos induit.

‡ Si prodigus filius viventem matrem habuisset, vel a paterna domo nunquam discessisset, vel forte citius rediisset.

§ In fluctibus maris ambulavi. C. xxiv. 8.

makes her to say: I walked with my servants in the midst of the tempests to which they are exposed, to assist them, and prevent them from falling into the precipice of sin.*

Father Bernardine de Bustis relates that a hawk darted upon a bird which had been taught to say Ave Maria; the bird said Ave Maria, and the hawk fell dead. By this our Lord wished to show us, that if an irrational bird was saved from destruction by invoking Mary, how much more surely will he be prevented from falling into the power of evil spirits, who is mindful to invoke Mary in his temptations. Nothing remains to be done, says St. Thomas of Villanova, when the devil comes to tempt us, but, like the chickens when the kite appears, to run quickly under the shelter of the wings of our mother. Let us, then, at the approach of the temptations which assail us, without stopping to parley with them, place ourselves at once under the protection of Mary.† And then, the saint goes on to say, our Lady and mother must defend us; for, after God, we have no refuge but thee, who art our only hope, and the only protectress in whom we may confide.‡

Let us, then, conclude with the words of St.

* Scilicet cum familiaribus meis, ut ipsos eruerem a naufragiis peccatorum.

† Sicut pulli, volitantibus desuper milvis, ad gallinæ alas occurrunt, ita nos sub velamento alarum tuarum abscondimur. Serm. 3, de Nat. Virg.

‡ Nescimus aliud refugium nisi te, tu sola es unica spes nostra, tu sola patrona nostra, ad quem omnes aspicimus.

Bernard:* Oh man, whoever thou art, thou knowest that in this miserable life thou art rather tossing on the tempestuous waves, among dangers and tempests, than walking upon the earth; if thou wouldst not sink, keep thy eye fixed on this star, namely, Mary. Look at the star, invoke Mary. When in danger of sinning, when tormented by temptations, when doubts disturb thee, remember that Mary can aid thee, and instantly call upon her. May her powerful name never depart from the confidence of thy heart, nor from the invocation of thy lips. If thou wilt follow Mary, thou shalt never wander from the path of safety. Commend thyself always to her, and thou shalt not despair. If she upholds thee, thou shalt not fall. If she protects thee, thou need not fear ruin. If she guides thee, thou shalt be saved without difficulty. In a word, if Mary undertakes to defend thee, thou shalt certainly arrive at the kingdom of the blessed. Thus do, and thou shalt live.

EXAMPLE.

In the celebrated history of St. Mary of Egypt, which we find in the first volume of the Lives of

* O quisquis te intelligis in hujus sæculi pro fluvio magis inter procellas et tempestates fluctuare, quam per terram ambulare; ne avertas oculos a fulgore hujus sideris, si non vis obrui procellis; respice stellam, voca Mariam. In periculis, in angustiis, in rebus dubiis Mariam cogita, Mariam invoca. Non recedat ab ore, non recedat a corde. Ipsam sequens, non devias. Ipsam rogans, non desperas. Ipsa tenente, non corruis. Ipsa protegente, non metuis. Ipsa duce, non fatigaris. Ipsa propitia, pervenis. Sic fac, et vives. **Hom. 2, super Missus.**

the Fathers, we read that, at twelve years of age she fled from her parents, and went to Alexandria, where she led an infamous life, and became the scandal of the city. After sixteen years spent in sin, she wandered off to Jerusalem; where, on the festival of the Holy Cross, she was led to enter the church, more from curiosity than devotion. On the threshold she was thrust back, as if by some invisible power; she attempted a second time to enter, and again was repelled, and a third and a fourth time the same thing happened. The wretched creature withdrew then into a corner of the portico, and there she was interiorly enlightened, and saw that God had refused her entrance into the church on account of her wicked life. By chance she raised her eyes, and saw a picture of Mary which was painted in the vestibule. She turned to it, weeping, and said: "Oh mother of God, have pity on this poor sinner! I know that, on account of my sins, I do not deserve that thou shouldst regard me; but thou art the refuge of sinners: for the love of Jesus, thy Son, help me. Obtain for me that I may enter the church, for I desire to change my life, and go and do penance wherever thou shalt direct." Then she heard an interior voice, as if the blessed Virgin answered her: "Come, since thou hast invoked me, and wishest to change thy life, enter the church, for the door will no longer be closed against thee." The sinner entered, adored the cross, and wept. She returned to the picture: "Oh Lady," she said, "I am ready;

where shall I retire to do penance?" "Go," said the Virgin, "beyond the Jordan, and thou wilt find the place of thy repose." She made her confession, received holy communion, passed the river, reached the desert, and understood that there was her place of penance. During the first seventeen years that she lived in the desert, the evil spirits fiercely assailed her, to make her fall again. What did she then do? She recommended herself to Mary, and Mary obtained for her strength to resist for seventeen years, after which the conflict ceased. Finally, after fifty-seven years spent in the desert, in the eighty-seventh of her age, through Divine Providence, she was found by the abbot St. Zosimus. To him she related the story of her whole life, and begged him to return there the following year, and bring her holy communion. The holy abbot returned, and gave her communion. Then she implored him again to do the same thing. He returned the second time, and found her dead, her body surrounded with light, and at her head these words written in the sand: "Bury in this place the body of me, a miserable sinner, and pray God for me." A lion came and dug her grave, the abbot buried her, and, returning to the monastery, he related the wonders of divine mercy towards this happy penitent.

PRAYER.

Oh mother of mercy! holy Virgin! behold at

thy feet the traitor, who, returning ingratitude for the favors received through thee from God has betrayed thee and God. But, oh my Lady! know that my misery does not destroy, but increases my confidence in thee, because I see that my misery increases thy compassion for me. Show, oh Mary! that thou art the same to me as thou art to all those who invoke thee, full of grace and mercy. It is enough for me that thou regardest me with compassion. If in thy heart thou hast pity for me, thou wilt not cease to protect me; and if thou dost protect me, what should I fear? No, I fear nothing; I fear not my sins, for thou canst remedy their evil consequences; nor the demons, for thou art more powerful than hell; nor thy Son who is justly angry with me, for at one word of thine he will be appeased. I only fear that through negligence I may fail to implore thy protection in my temptations, and that this may cause my ruin. But I promise thee to-day, I will always have recourse to thee. Help me to keep this resolution. Behold the opportunity thou hast of satisfying thy desire to relieve so miserable a creature as I am.

Oh mother of God, I have great confidence in thee. From thee I expect the grace to do just penance for my sins, and from thee I hope the strength never more to fall back into them. If I am sick, thou canst heal me, oh heavenly physician. If my sins have made me weak, thy help can make me strong. Oh Mary, I hope every

thing from thee, for thou hast all power with God.

SECTION III.

Dulcedo:—Sweetness.

MARY RENDERS DEATH SWEET TO HER SERVANTS.

"He that is a friend loveth at all times; and a brother is proved in distress."* *True* friends and relatives are not known in times of prosperity, but in the season of adversity and misery. Worldly friends do not desert their friend when he is in prosperity; but if any misfortune overtakes him, particularly in the hour of death, immediately his friends abandon him. Not so does Mary desert her devoted servants. In their distresses, and especially at the trying hour of death, when our sufferings are the greatest that can be endured on earth, she our good Lady and mother cannot abandon her faithful servants; and as she is our life in the time of our exile, so is she also our sweetness in the hour of death, by obtaining for us that it may be sweet and blessed. For since that great day in which it was the lot and the grief of Mary to be present at the death of Jesus, her Son, who was the head of the elect, she obtained the grace of aiding at death all the elect. Hence the holy

* Omni tempore diligit qui amicus est, et frater in angustiis comprobatur. Prov. xvii. 17.

Church requires us to pray the blessed Virgin, that she would especially aid us in the hour of our death: "Pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death."*

The sufferings of the dying are very great, on account of their remorse for sins committed, their dread of approaching judgment, and the uncertainty of eternal salvation. At that moment especially, the devil puts forth all his power to gain the soul that is passing into eternity; knowing that the time is short in which he may win her, and that if he loses her, he has lost her forever. "The devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time."† And therefore the devil, who has always tempted her in life, will not be satisfied to tempt her alone in death, but calls companions to his aid: "Their houses shall be filled with serpents."‡ When any one is at the point of death, his house is filled with demons, who unite to accomplish his ruin.

It is related of St. Andrew Avellino, that at the time of his death, ten thousand devils came to tempt him; and we read in his life, that at the time of his agony he had so fierce a struggle with hell, that it caused all his good religious who were present to tremble. They saw the face of the saint swell from agitation, so that it

* Ora pro nobis peccatoribus, nunc et in hora mortis nostræ.

† Descendit Diabolus ad vos, habens iram magnam, sciens quod modicum tempus habet. Apoc. xii. 12.

‡ Implebuntur domus eorum draconibus. Isa. xiii. 21.

became black; they saw all his limbs trembling, and greatly agitated, rivers of tears flowed from his eyes, and his head shook violently; all these were signs of the horrible assault he was suffering from the powers of hell. All the religious wept in compassion, redoubled their prayers, and trembled with fear when they saw that a saint died thus. Yet they were consoled by seeing that the saint often turned his eyes, as if seeking help, towards a devout image of Mary, for they remembered that he had often said in life, that in the hour of his death, Mary must be his refuge. It finally pleased God to terminate this struggle by a glorious victory, for the agitation of his body ceased, his countenance gained its natural shape and color, and fixing his eyes tranquilly on that image, he devoutly bowed his head to Mary, who, it is believed, then appeared to him, as if to thank her, and quietly breathed forth in her arms his blessed soul, with heavenly peace depicted on his countenance. At the same time a Capuchin nun, in her agony, turned to the religious who were with her and said: "Say an Ave Maria, for a saint has just died."

Ah, how these rebels flee before the presence of their queen! If, in the hour of death, we have Mary on our side, what fear can we have of all the powers of hell? David, in dread of the agony of death, comforted himself with confidence in the death of his future Redeemer, and in the intercession of the Virgin mother: "For though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of

death, I fear no evils, for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they have comforted me."* Cardinal Hugo understands the *staff* to signify the tree of the Cross, and the *rod* the intercession of Mary, who was the rod foretold by Isaias: "And there shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse, and a flower shall rise up out of his root."† This divine mother, says St. Peter Damian, is that powerful rod by which the fury of the infernal enemies is conquered.‡ Hence St. Antoninus encourages us, saying: If Mary is for us, who is against us?§ Father Manuel Padial, of the Society of Jesus, being at the point of death, Mary appeared to him, and said, to comfort him: "The hour has at length come when the angels, rejoicing, say to thee, Oh happy labors! oh mortifications well recompensed!" At which words an army of devils was seen taking flight in despair, crying: "Alas! we have no power, for she who is without stain defends him."‖ In like manner, the devils assailed Father Jasper Haywood, when he was dying, with great temptations against faith; he immediately commended himself to the most holy Virgin, and then was heard to exclaim: "I thank thee, oh Mary, that thou hast come to my aid."¶

* Et si ambulavero in medio umbræ mortis, virga tua, et baculus tuus ipsa me consolata sunt. Psal. xxii. 4.

† Egredietur virga de radice Jesse, et flos de radice ejus ascendet. Isa. xi. 1.

‡ Hæc est illa virga, qua retunduntur impetus adversantium dæmonum. Serm. de Ass. B. V

§ Si Maria pro nobis, quis contra nos.

‖ Patrig. Menol. alii. 28 Apr. ¶ Patrig. Men. etc.

St. Bonaventure says that Mary sends the archangel Michael, with all the angels, to the defence of her dying servants, to protect them from the assaults of evil spirits, and to receive the souls of all those who have especially and constantly recommended themselves to her.*

When a man leaves this life, Isaias says that hell is in uproar, and sends its most terrible demons to tempt that soul before it leaves the body, and then afterwards to accuse it when it is presented at the tribunal of Jesus Christ to be judged: "Hell below was in an uproar to meet thee; at thy coming it stirred up the giants for thee." † But Richard says, that the demons, when that soul is defended by Mary, will not even dare to accuse it; knowing that a soul protected by this great mother is never, and will never, be condemned.‡ St. Jerome wrote to the virgin Eustochium, that Mary not only assists her dear servants in their death, but also comes to meet them in their passage to the other life, to encourage them and accompany them to the divine tribunal.§ And this agrees with what the blessed Virgin said to St. Bridget, speaking

* Michael dux et princeps militiæ cœlestis cum omnibus administratoriis spiritibus, tuis, virgo, paret præceptis, in defendendis, et suscipiendis de corpore animabus Fidelium, specialiter tibi, Domina, die, ac nocte se commendantium. In Spec. B. V. c. 3.

† Infernus subter te conturbatus est in occursum adventus tui, suscitabit sibi gigantes. Isa. xiv. 9.

‡ Quis apud judicem accusare audeat, cui viderit matrem patrocinantem? Ricc. ap. Pep. to. 5, Lez. 244.

§ Morientibus beata virgo, non tantum succurrit, sed etiam occurrit. Epist. 2.

of her servants when they are at the point of death: "Then I, their most loving Lady and mother, hasten to them in death, that they may have consolation and comfort."* St. Vincent of Ferrer adds: The blessed Virgin receives the souls of the dying. The loving queen receives their souls under her protection, and she herself presents them to the judge her Son, and thus certainly procures their salvation.† This happened to Charles, son of St. Bridget, who, dying in the perilous profession of a soldier, and far from his mother, the saint feared for his salvation; but the blessed Virgin revealed to her that Charles was saved for the love he bore her, in recompense of which she had assisted him in death, and had suggested to him the christian acts necessary to be made at that moment. The saint saw at the same time Jesus upon a throne, and the devil bringing two accusations against the most holy Virgin: the first, that Mary had prevented him from tempting Charles at the moment of death; the second, that Mary herself had presented his soul to its judge, and thus had saved without even giving him an opportunity to expose the reasons why he claimed it as his own. She then saw him driven from the presence of the judge, and the soul of Charles taken to heaven.

* Tunc ego carissima eorum domina et mater occurram eis in morte, ut ipsi consolationem et refrigerium habeant. Rev. lib. i, c. 29.

† Beata virgo animas morientium suscipit. Serm. de Ass.

"Her bands are a healthful binding; in the latter end thou shalt find rest in her."* Blessed art thou, oh brother, if in death thou shalt find thyself bound by the sweet chains of love for the mother of God! These chains are chains of salvation, which will secure to thee eternal salvation, and give thee in death that blessed peace which will be the commencement of thy eternal peace and rest. Father Binetti, in his book "On the Perfections of our Lord," relates that having been present at the death of a devoted servant of Mary, he heard from him these words before he breathed his last: "Oh, my Father, if you knew what happiness I find in having served the most holy mother of God! I could not describe to you the joy I feel at this moment."† Father Suarez, because he was all his life very devoted to Mary, used to say, that he would willingly exchange all his knowledge for the merit of one Hail Mary, and died with so much joy, that he exclaimed at his last moment, "I never imagined it would be so sweet to die,—non putabam tam dulce esse mori."‡ You too, devout reader, will doubtless feel the same peace and joy, if at death you can remember having loved this good mother, who cannot but be faithful to her children, when they are faithful to her service, paying her their offerings of visits, rosaries, and fastings, and

* Vincula ejus alligatura salutaris, in novissimis invenies requiem in ea. Eccli. vi. 29, 31.

† C. 31.

‡ Opusc. 33, c. 4.

especially thanking her, praising her, and often commending themselves to her powerful protection.

Neither will you be deprived of this consolation on account of your sins, if from henceforth you will be careful to live well, and to serve this very grateful and gracious Lady. In the trials and temptations with which the devil will assail you, that he may throw you into despair, she will comfort you, and even come herself to assist you in death. Martin, brother of St. Peter Damian, as the saint himself relates, finding that he had offended God, went one day before an altar of Mary to dedicate himself to her service, putting his girdle around his neck in token of his servitude, and thus said: "My Lady, mirror of purity, I, a poor sinner, have offended God and thee by violating chastity: I have no other remedy than to offer myself as thy servant; to thy service I dedicate myself to-day; receive this rebel, do not despise me." He then laid on the altar a certain sum of money, promising to pay the same every year as a tribute of his devotion to Mary. After some time Martin died; but before his death he was heard one morning to say: "Arise, arise, pay homage to my Lady;" and afterwards: "What a favor is this, oh queen of heaven, that thou shouldst condescend to visit this thy poor servant. Bless me, oh Lady, and permit me not to be lost after thou hast honored me with thy presence." At this moment his brother Peter entered. Martin re-

lated to him the visit of Mary, and how she had blessed him, lamenting that the persons present had not arisen at her entrance; and shortly after quietly passed away to our Lord. Such will be your death also, oh my reader, if you are faithful to Mary, even if in your past life you have offended God. She will give you a sweet and happy death.

And if then you are greatly alarmed and lose courage in view of the sins you have committed, she will come to comfort you as she came to Adolphus, Count of Alsace, who, having quitted the world and become a Franciscan, as the chronicles relate, was very devoted to the mother of God. His last days arrived, and at the remembrance of the life he had led in the world, and the rigor of divine justice, he began to fear death and doubt of his salvation. Then Mary, who never sleeps when her faithful servants are in trouble, accompanied by many saints, appeared to him, and encouraged him with these tender words of consolation: "My dear Adolphus, thou art mine, thou hast given thyself to me, then why dost thou so greatly fear death?"* The servant of Mary was consoled by these words, every fear disappeared, and he died in great peace and contentment.

Let us, too, although we are sinners, take courage and have the confidence that Mary will come to assist us in death, and console us by

* Adolphe mi carissime, mori cur times, meus cum sis?

her presence, if we serve and love her during the remainder of our life on this earth. Our queen, speaking one day to St. Matilda, promised that she would be present at the death of all those devoted children who had faithfully served her in life.* Oh my God, what a consolation must it be in that last hour of life, when our lot for eternity is to be decided, to find close by our side the queen of heaven, who sustains and comforts us by promising us her protection! Besides the examples already cited of the assistance afforded by Mary to her faithful servants, they are innumerable others to be found in various books. This favor was granted to St. Clare, to St. Felix, a Capuchin, to the blessed Clara of Montefalco, to St. Theresa, and St. Peter of Alcantara. But for our common consolation, I will mention the few following examples. Father Crasset relates† that St. Mary of Oignies saw the blessed Virgin by the pillow of a devout widow of Villembroe, who was tormented by a burning fever. The most holy Mary was standing by her side consoling her, and cooling her with a fan. St. John of God, at death, expected a visit from Mary, to whom he was greatly devoted; but finding she did not come, he was afflicted, and perhaps complained a little. But at length the holy mother appeared to him, and as

* Ego omnibus qui mihi pie deserviunt, volo in morte fidelissime tamquam mater piissima adesse eosque consolari ac protegere. Ap. Blos. p. 2, Concl. an. fid. cap. 12.

† Div. alla verg. tom. 1, tr. 1, q. 11.

if reproaching him for his want of confidence, said to him these tender words, which should encourage all the servants of Mary: "John, it is not in my heart, at this hour, to desert my children."* As if she had said to him: My John, of what were you thinking? that I had abandoned you? Do you not know that I cannot abandon my devoted children at the hour of death? I did not come before, because it was not yet time; but now I come ready to take you, let us go to paradise. And soon after the saint expired, and flew to heaven to give thanks eternally to his most loving queen.†

EXAMPLE.

I will now relate another example by way of conclusion to the subject of which I have been just speaking, and for the sake of showing how great is the tenderness of this good mother towards her children when they are dying.

The pastor of a certain place went to assist at the death-bed of a rich man. He was dying in a splendid house, and a multitude of relations, friends, and servants, surrounded his bed. But among these, the priest saw a number of devils in the shape of hounds, who waited to seize upon his soul, and who actually did so; for he died in sin. At the same time he was sent for by a poor woman, who was dying, and desired the

* Joannes non est meum, in hac hora meos devotos derelinquere.
† Bolland. 8 Martii.

holy sacraments; not being able to leave the dying rich man, whose soul was so much in need of his assistance, he sent another priest to her, who accordingly went, carrying with him the holy sacrament. He found in the dwelling of that good woman no servants, no retinue, no splendid furniture, for she was very poor, and we may suppose had only a little straw to lie upon. But what does he see? He sees in that apartment a great light, and near the bed of the dying person was Mary the mother of God, who was consoling her, and with a cloth was wiping the sweat from her brow. The priest seeing Mary, had not the courage to enter, but she made a motion to him to approach. He entered, Mary pointed to a seat, that he might sit down and hear the confession of her servant. The poor woman then made her confession, received the holy sacrament with much devotion, and at last expired happily in the arms of Mary.*

PRAYER.

Oh my sweetest mother, what will be the death of me, a poor sinner? Even now, when thinking of that great moment, in which I must die, and be presented at the divine tribunal, and remembering how often, by my wicked consent, I myself have written my own sentence of condemnation, I tremble, am confounded, and fear greatly for my eternal salvation. Oh Mary, my hopes

* Crisog. Mond. Mar. p. 3, d. 38.

are in the blood of Jesus, and in thy intercession. Thou art the Queen of heaven! the Lady of the universe! it is sufficient to say that thou art the mother of God. Thou art great, but thy greatness does not separate thee from us; it even inclines thee to have more compassion on our miseries. When our earthly friends are raised to any dignity, they seclude themselves from those whom they have left in a low estate, and will not condescend even to look at them. But it is not so with thy loving and noble heart. Where thou dost behold the greatest misery, there thou art most intent on giving relief. When invoked, thou dost immediately come to our aid, and even anticipate our supplications; thou dost console us in our afflictions, dissipate all tempests, put down our enemies; in a word, thou dost never omit an opportunity of doing us good. Ever blessed be that divine hand which has united in thee so much majesty and so much tenderness, so much greatness and so much love! I always thank our Lord, and congratulate myself that I can regard thy happiness and mine, thy fate and mine as one. Oh consoler of the afflicted, console in his affliction one who recommends himself to thee. I am tortured with remorse for my many sins; I am uncertain whether I have repented of them as I ought to have done; I see how corrupt and imperfect are all my works. The devil is awaiting my death in order to accuse me. Divine justice violated must be satisfied. Oh my mother, what will become of

me? If thou dost not aid me, I am lost. Answer me, wilt thou aid me? Oh merciful Virgin, console me; obtain for me strength to amend, and to be faithful to God during what remains to me of life. And when I shall find myself in the last agony of death, oh Mary! my hope, do not abandon me; then more than ever assist me, and save me from despair at the sight of my sins, of which the devils will accuse me. Oh Lady, pardon my boldness; come, then, thyself to console me by thy presence. Grant me this favor which thou hast bestowed on so many; I also desire it. If my boldness is great, greater still is thy goodness, which seeks the most miserable to console them. In this, thy goodness, I trust. May it be to thy eternal glory that thou hast saved from hell a miserable wretch, and brought him to thy kingdom, where I hope to console myself by being always at thy feet to thank, bless, and love thee throughout eternity. Oh Mary, I wait for thee, do not leave me then disconsolate. Come, come. Amen, amen.

CHAPTER III.

SPES NOSTRA SALVE.

Hail, our hope.

SECTION I.

MARY IS THE HOPE OF ALL.

MODERN heretics cannot endure that we should salute Mary in this manner by calling her our hope. Hail, our hope, "spes nostra salve." They say that God alone is our hope, and that he who places his hope in a creature is accursed of God.* Mary, they exclaim, is a creature, and, as a creature, how can she be our hope? Thus say the heretics, but notwithstanding this, the Church requires all the clergy, and all religious daily to raise their voices, and in the name of all the faithful, invoke and call Mary by the sweet name of our hope, the hope of all: "Hail, our hope!"

In two ways, says the angelic St. Thomas, can we place our hope in a person: as the principal cause, and as the intermediate cause. Those

* Maledictus homo qui confidit in homine. Jer. xvii. 5.

who hope for some favor from the king, hope for it from the king as sovereign, and hope for it from his minister or favorite as intercessor. If the favor is granted, it comes in the first place from the king, but it comes through the medium of his favorite; wherefore, he who asks a favor justly calls that intercessor his hope. The king of heaven, because he is infinite goodness, greatly desires to enrich us with his graces; but, because confidence is necessary on our part, in order to increase our confidence, he has given his own mother for our mother and advocate, and has given her all power to aid us; and hence he wishes us to place in her all our hopes of salvation, and of every blessing. Those who place all their hope on creatures, without dependence upon God, as sinners do, who to obtain the friendship and favor of man, are willing to displease God, are certainly cursed by God, as Isaias says. But those who hope in Mary, as mother of God, powerful to obtain for them graces and life eternal, are blessed, and please the heart of God, who wishes to see that noble creature honored, who, more than all men and angels, loved and honored him in this world.

Hence we justly call the Virgin our hope hoping, as Cardinal Bellarmine says, to obtain, by her intercession what we could not obtain by our prayers alone.* We pray to her, says St. Anselm, in order that the dignity of the inter-

* De Beat. SS. lib. 2. cap. 2.

cessor may supply our deficiencies.* Therefore, the saint adds, to supplicate the Virgin with such hope, is not to distrust the mercy of God, but to fear our own unworthiness.†

With reason does the Church, then, apply to Mary the words of Ecclesiasticus, with which he salutes her: "Mother of holy hope;"‡ that mother who inspires us not with the vain hope of the miserable and transitory advantages of this life, but with the holy hope of the immense and eternal good of the blessed life to come. St. Ephrem thus salutes the divine mother: "Hail, hope of the soul! hail, secure salvation of Christians! hail, helper of sinners! hail, defence of the faithful, and salvation of the world!"§ St. Basil teaches us that, next to God, we have no other hope than Mary, and for this reason he calls her: After God our only hope, "Post Deum sola spes nostra;" and St. Ephrem, reflecting on the order of Providence in this life, by which God has ordained (as St. Bernard says, and we shall hereafter prove at length) that all those who are saved must be saved by means of Mary, says to her: Oh Lady, do not cease to receive and shelter us under the mantle of thy protection, since, after

* Ut dignitas intercessoris suppleat inopiam nostram. De Exc. V. c. 6.

† Unde Virginem interpellare, non est de divina misericordia diffidere, sed de propria indignitate formidare. Loc. cit.

‡ Mater sanctæ spei. Cap. xxiv. 24.

§ Ave animæ spes; ave Christianorum firma salus; ave peccatorum adjutrix; ave vallum fidelium; et mundi salus. De Laud. Virg.

God, we have no hope but thee.* St. Thomas of Villanova says the same thing, calling her our only refuge, help, and protection.†

St. Bernard assigns the reason for this by saying: Behold, oh man, the design of God, a design arranged for our benefit, that he may be able to bestow upon us more abundantly his compassion; for, wishing to redeem the human race, he has placed the price of our redemption in the hands of Mary, that she may dispense it at her pleasure.‡

God ordered Moses to make a propitiatory of the purest gold, telling him that from it he would speak to him: "Thou shalt make a propitiatory of the purest gold. Thence will I give orders, and will speak to thee."‡ A certain author explains this propitiatory to be Mary, through whom the Lord speaks to men, and dispenses to them pardon, graces, and favors.§ And therefore St. Irenæus says that the divine Word, before incarnating himself in the womb of Mary, sent the archangel to obtain her consent, because he would have the world indebted to Mary for

* Nobis non est alia quam a te fiducia, O Virgo sincerissima; sub alis tuæ pietatis protege et custodi nos. De Laud. Virg.

* Tu unicum nostrum, refugium subsidium, et asylum. Con 3, de Conc. Virg.

† Intuere, homo, consilium Dei, consilium pietatis; redempturus humanum genus, universum prætium contulit in Maria. Serm. de Nat.

‡ Facies et propitiatorium de auro mundissimo. . . . . Inde præcipiam et loquar ad te. Exod. c. xxv. v. 17, 22.

§ Te universus mundus continet commune propitiatorium. Inde plentissimus Dominus loquitur ad cor; inde responsa dat benignitatis et veniæ; inde munera largitur; inde nobis omne bonum emanat.

the mystery of the incarnation.* Also the Idiot remarks, that every blessing, every help, every grace that men have received or will receive from God, to the end of the world, has come to them, and will come to them, through the intercession and by means of Mary.† Rightly, then did the devout Blosius exclaim : Oh Mary, who art so amiable, and so grateful to him who loves thee, who will be so stupid and unhappy as not to love thee! In doubt and perplexity thou dost enlighten the minds of those who have recourse to thee in their troubles. Thou art the comfort of those who trust in thee, in time of danger. Thou dost help those who invoke thee. Thou art, continues Blosius, next to thy divine Son, the secure salvation of thy servants. Hail then, oh hope of the despairing. Hail helper of the destitute ! Oh Mary, thou art omnipotent, since thy Son would honor thee by immediately doing all that thou desirest.‡

St. Germanus, recognizing Mary to be the source of every blessing, and the deliverance from every evil, thus invokes her: Oh my Lady, thou alone art my help, given me by God; thou

* Quid est quod sineMariæ consensu non perficitur incarnationis mysterium? quia nempe vult illam Deus omnium bonorum esse principium. Lib. 3, contr. Valent. c. 33.

† Per ipsam habet mundus, et habiturus est omne bonum. In Pref. Contempl. B. M.

‡ O Maria quis te non amet? Tu in dubiis es lumen, in mœroribus solatium, in periculis refugium. Tu post unigenitum tuum certa fidelium salus. Ave desperantium spes, ave destitutorum adjutrix. Cujus honori tantum tribuit Filius, ut quod vis, mox fiat. Cimeliarch. Embol. I, ad Mar.

art the guide of my pilgrimage, the support of my weakness, my riches in poverty, my deliverer from bondage, the hope of my salvation: graciously listen, I pray thee to my supplications, take compassion on my sighs, thou my queen, my refuge, my life, my help, my hope, my strength.*

Justly, then, does St. Antoninus apply to Mary that passage of wisdom: "Now all good things came to me together with her." † Since Mary is the mother of God and the dispenser of all good, the world may truly say, and especially those in the world who are devoted to this queen, that, together with devotion to Mary, they have obtained every good thing.‡ Wherefore the Abbot of Celles said positively: He who has found Mary finds every good thing.§ He finds all graces and all virtues; since she by her powerful intercession obtains for him in abundance all that he needs to make him rich in divine grace. She gives us to know that she has with her all the riches of God, that is, the divine mercies, that she may dispense them for

* Oh Domina mea, sola mihi ex Deo solatium, itineris mei directio, debilitatis meæ potentia, mendicitatis meæ divitiæ, vulnerum meorum medicina, dolorum meorum revelatio, vinculorum meorum solatio, salutis meæ spes; exaudi orationes meas, miserere suspiriorum meorum, Domina mea, refugium, vita, auxilium, spes et robur meum. In Encom. Deip.

† Venerunt autem mihi omnia bona pariter cum illa. Cap. vii. v. 11.

‡ Omnium bonorum mater est; et venerunt mihi omnia bona cum illa, scilicet virgine, potest dicere mundus. S. Anton. Part. 4. tit. 17, c. 20.

§ Inventa Maria, invenitur omne bonum.

the benefit of those who love her. "With me are riches and glory, that I may enrich them that love me."* Hence St. Bonaventure says: We should all keep our eyes fixed on the hands of Mary, that through her we may receive the blessings we desire. †

Oh! how many of the proud have found humility through devotion to Mary; how many of the violent, meekness; how many blind, the light; how many despairing, confidence; how many lost, salvation! And precisely this she herself predicted when she pronounced in the house of Elizabeth that sublime canticle: "Behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed."‡ Which words St. Bernard repeats, and says: All nations will call thee blessed, for to all nations thou hast given life and glory; in thee sinners find pardon, and the just find perseverance in divine grace.§ Whence the devout Lanspergius represents the Lord thus speaking to the world: Venerate my mother with especial veneration. Oh men, he says, poor children of Adam, who live in the midst of so many enemies and so much misery, strive to

* Mecum sunt divitiæ et opes superbæ . . . . ut ditem diligentes me. Prov. viii. 18-21.

† Oculi omnium nostrum ad manus Mariæ semper debent respicere, ut per manus ejus aliquid boni accipiamus. In Spec.

‡ Ecce enim ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes generationes. Luc. i. 48.

§ Ex hoc beatam te dicent omnes generationes, quæ omnibus generationibus vitam et gloriam genuisti. In te peccatores veniam, justi gratiam inveniunt in æternum. Serm. 2, in Pentec.

honor with particular affection my mother and yours. I have given her to the world as an example of purity, a refuge and asylum for the afflicted.* That is, I have given Mary to the world for your example, that from her you may learn to live as you ought ; and for your refuge, that you may have recourse to her, in your tribulations. This my child, says God, I have created such that no one can fear her, or be unwilling to have recourse to her, for I have created her with so benign and compassionate a nature, that she will not despise any who seek her protection, and she will deny no favor to any who ask it. She spreads the mantle of her compassion over all, and never permits any one to go from her feet unconsoled. May the great goodness of our God, then, be ever blessed, who has given us this great mother and advocate, so loving and tender.

Oh ! how tender are the sentiments of confidence which filled the heart of the most loving St. Bonaventure for his dear Redeemer Jesus, and for our loving intercessor Mary ! Let the Lord chastise me as much as seemeth to him good, I know that he will not refuse himself to those who love him and who seek him with an upright heart. I will embrace him with

* Matrem meam veneratione præcipua venerare; ego enim mundo dedi in puritatis exemplum, in præsidium tutissimum, ut sit tribulatis asylum, quam nemo formidet; nemo ad eam accedere trepidet. Propterea namque adeo feci eam mitem, adeo misericordem ut neminem aspernat, nulli se neget; omnibus pietatis sinum apertum teneat, neminem a se redire tristem sinat. Lib. 4. Min. Op.

my love, and I will not let him go till he has blessed me, and he will not depart without me. If I can do nothing else, at least I will hide myself in his wounds ; there I will remain, and out of himself he shall not be able to find me.* Finally, he adds, if my Redeemer, for my sins, drives me from his feet, I will cast myself at the feet of his mother Mary, and, prostrate there, I will not depart until she has obtained my pardon; for this mother of mercy has never failed to take pity on misery and console the wretched who seek her aid ; and therefore, if not from obligation, at least from compassion, she will not fail to induce her Son to pardon me.†

Look upon us, then, we will conclude with the words of Euthymius, look upon us, then, with thine eyes of compassion, oh our most merciful mother, for we are thy servants, and in thee we have placed all our hope.‡

EXAMPLE.

It is related in the Fourth Part of the Treasure of the Rosary, miracle eighty-fifth, that a gentleman who was most devoted to the divine

* Quantumcumque me Deus præsciverat, scio quod seipsum negare non potest. Eum amplexabor, et si mihi non benedixerit, eum non demittam; et sine me recedere non valebit. In cavernis vulnerum suorum me abscondam, ibique extra se me invenire non poterit.

† Ad matris suæ pedes provolutus stabo, et mihi veniam impetret; ipsa enim non misereri ignorat; et miseris non satisfacere nunquam scivit. Ideoque ex compassione mihi ad indulgentiam Filium inclinabit. P. 3, Stim. Div. Am. c. 13.

‡ Respice, O mater misericordiosissima, respice servos tuos, in te enim omnem spem nostram collocavimus. Orat de Deip.

mother, had set apart in his palace an oratory where, before a beautiful statue of Mary, he was accustomed often to remain praying, not only by day, but also by night, interrupting his rest to go and honor his beloved Lady; but his wife, for he was married, though she was a very devout person, observing that her husband in the deepest silence of the night left his bed, and going from his apartment did not return for a long time, became jealous, and was suspicious of evil; wherefore, one day, to free herself from this thorn which tormented her, she ventured to ask him if he ever loved any other woman but herself. Smiling, he answered her: "I assure you that I love the most amiable lady in the world; to her I have given my whole heart and rather would I die than cease to love her; if you knew her, you would say that I ought to love her more than I do." He meant the most holy Virgin whom he loved so tenderly. But his wife, conceiving a greater suspicion than before, in order to ascertain the truth better, interrogated him anew, and asked him if he arose from his bed and left the room every night to meet that lady. The gentleman, who did not perceive the great trouble of his wife, answered "Yes." The wife was completely deceived, and, blinded by passion, one night when her husband according to his custom, had left the chamber, seized a knife in despair, cut her throat, and very soon died. Her husband having finished his devotions, returned to his apartment, but. on going

to bed, found it wet. He called his wife; she did not answer: he tried to arouse her; she was immovable. At length he took a light, found the bed full of blood, and his wife dead, with her throat cut. Then he perceived that she had destroyed herself through jealousy. What does he do? He locks the door of his apartment, returns to the chapel, prostrates himself before the most blessed Virgin, and shedding a torrent of tears, said to her: "Oh my mother, behold my affliction: if thou dost not console me, to whom shall I go? Remember I am so unfortunate as to see my wife dead and lost because I have come hither to pay thee honor, oh my mother, who dost help us in all our troubles, help me now." How surely does every one obtain what he wishes if he supplicates with confidence this mother of mercy! No sooner did he offer this prayer than he heard a servant-maid calling him: "My lord, come to your apartment, for your lady calls you." The gentleman could hardly believe these words for joy. Return, he said to the servant, and see if she really calls me. She returned, entreating him to go quickly, for her mistress was waiting for him. He went, opened the door, and found his wife living; she threw herself at his feet in tears and begged him to pardon her, saying: "Oh, my husband, the mother of God, through thy prayer, has delivered me from hell." Weeping for joy, they went to their oratory to thank the blessed Virgin. The next day the husband made a feast,

for all their relations, to whom the wife herself related the facts, at the same time showing the marks of the wound, and all were more deeply inflamed with the love of the divine mother.

PRAYER.

Oh mother of holy love, oh our life, our refuge, and our hope, thou knowest that thy Son Jesus Christ, not content with making himself our perpetual intercessor with the eternal Father, would have thee also engaged in obtaining for us, by thy prayers, the divine mercy. He has ordained that thy prayers should aid in our salvation,and has given such power to them that they obtain whatever they ask; I, a miserable sinner, turn to thee then, oh hope of the wretched. I hope, oh Lady, through the merits of Jesus Christ and thy intercession to secure my salvation. In these I trust; and so entirely do I trust in thee, that if my eternal salvation were in my own hands, I would wish to place it in thine ; for in thy mercy and protection I would trust far more than in my own works. My mother and my hope, do not abandon me, as I deserve. Behold my misery, pity me, help me, save me. I confess that I have often, by my sins, shut out the light and aid which thou hast obtained for me from the Lord.

But thy compassion for the wretched and thy power with God are far greater than the number and malignity of my sins. It is known

in heaven and on earth that he who is protected by thee will certainly not perish. Let all forget me, but do not thou forget me, oh mother of the omnipotent God. Say unto God that I am thy servant, tell him that I am defended by thee, and I shall be saved. Oh Mary, I trust in thee: in this hope I live, and in this hope I wish to die, repeating always: "Jesus is my only hope, and after Jesus, Mary."*

SECTION II.

MARY THE HOPE OF SINNERS.

After God had created the earth he created two lights, the greater and the less: the sun to give light by day, and the moon to give light by night.† The sun, says Cardinal Hugo, was the type of Jesus Christ, in whose light the just rejoice who live in the daylight of divine grace; but the moon was the type of Mary, by whom sinners are enlightened, who are living in the night of sin.‡ Mary, then, being the moon, so propitious to miserable sinners, if any unhappy person, says Innocent III. finds that he has fallen into this night of sin, what must he do? Since he has lost the light of the sun, by loosing divine grace, let him turn to the moon, let him

* Unica spes mea Jesus, et post Jesum Virgo Maria.

† Fecitque Deus duo luminaria magna; luminare majus ut præesset diei, luminare minus ut præesset nocti. Gen. i. 16.

‡ Luminare majus Christus, qui præest justis; luminare minus est Maria, quæ præest peccatoribus.

pray to Mary, and she will give him light to know the misery of his condition, and strength to come forth from it.* St. Methodius says that by the prayers of Mary innumerable sinners are continually converted.†

One of the titles by which the holy Church teaches us to invoke the divine mother, and which most encourages poor sinners, is the title of "Refuge of Sinners," with which we invoke her in the Litanies. There were anciently, in Judea, cities of refuge; and criminals, who sought protection in them, were free from the penalty of their offences. Now, there are not so many cities of refuge, but instead of these there is one only, Mary; of whom it was spoken: Glorious things are said of thee, oh city of God--Gloriosa dieta sunt de te civitas Dei.‡ But with this difference, that not all criminals could find refuge in those ancient cities, nor for all sorts of crime; but under the mantle of Mary all offenders may find protection, whatever crimes they have committed. It is sufficient for any one to have recourse to her for protection. "I am the city of refuge for all those who flee to me,"§ as St. John of Damascus says, speaking in her name.

It is enough that we have recourse to her.

* Qui jacet in nocte culpæ, respiciat lunam, deprecetur Mariam. Serm. 2, de Ass. B. V.

† Mariæ virtute et precibus pene innumeræ peccatorum conversiones fiunt.

‡ Psal. lxxxvi. 3.

§ Ego civitas refugii omnium ad me confugientium. Or. 2. de Dorm.

He who has been so happy as to enter this city need not speak in order to secure his safety. "Assemble yourselves and let us enter into the fenced city, and let us be silent there."* This fenced city, as the blessed Albertus Magnus explains it, is the holy Virgin, whose defence is grace and glory. "Let us be silent there," according to the gloss: "since we may not dare to supplicate the Lord for pardon, it is enough that we enter into the city and are silent, for then Mary will speak and will pray for us."† Whence a devout writer exhorts all sinners to seek shelter under the mantle of Mary, saying: Fly, oh Adam, oh Eve, and ye their children, who have offended God; fly and take refuge in the bosom of this good mother. Do you not know that she is the only city of refuge, and the only hope of sinners?‡ As St. Augustine has called her, The only hope of sinners: "Unica spes peccatorum."§

Hence St. Ephrem says: Thou art the only advocate of sinners, and of those who are deprived of every help; and he thus salutes her: Hail! refuge and retreat of sinners, to whom alone they can flee with confidence.‖ And this is

* Convenite celeriter et ingrediamur civitatem munitam, et sileamus ibi. Jerem. viii. 14.

† Et sileamus ibi. Quia non audemus deprecari Dominum quem offendimus, ipsa, deprecetur et roget.

‡ Fugite O Adam, O Eva, fugite eorum liberi intra sinum matris Mariæ. Ipsa est civitas refugii, spes unica peccatorum. B. Fernandez, in c. iv. Gen.

§ Serm. 18, de Sanct.

‖ Ave peccatorum refugium et hospitium: ad quam nimirum confugere possunt peccatores. De. Laud. Virg.

what David intended to express, says a certain author, when he said: "He hath protected me in the secret place of his tabernacle."* And what is this tabernacle, if not Mary? As St. Germanus calls her, a tabernacle made by God, in which none but God has entered, in order to complete the great mysteries of human redemption.† On this subject the great Father St. Basil says: The Lord has given us Mary as a public hospital where all the infirm are poor, and destitute of every other help, may assemble: "Aperuit nobis Deus publicum valetudinarium." Now, in hospitals established expressly for the reception of the poor, I would ask, who have the first claim to be received, if not the poorest and most infirm?

Wherefore, let him who finds himself not miserable, because most destitute of merit, and most afflicted by the maladies of the soul, namely, sins, say to Mary: Oh Lady, thou art the refuge to the infirm; do not reject me, for, because I am the poorest and most infirm of all, I have the greater claim upon thee to receive me. Let us say with St. Thomas of Villanova: Oh Mary, we poor sinners know no refuge but thee. Thou art our only hope; to thee we intrust our salvation. Thou art the only advocate with Jesus Christ; to to thee we all have recourse.‡

* Protexit me in abscondito tabernaculi sui. Psal. xxvi. 5.

† Tabernaculum a Deo fabricatum, in quo solus Deus ingressus est sacris mysteriis operaturus in te pro salute omnium hominum.

‡ Nescimus aliud refugium nisi te. Tu sola es unica spes nostra, in qua confidimus. Tu sola patrona nostra, ad quam omnes aspicimus. Serm. 3. de Nat. B. V.

In the Revelations of St. Bridget, Mary is called the star going before the sun: "Sidus vadens ante solem."* By which we are to understand, that when devotion to the divine mother first dawns in a sinful soul, it is a certain sign that God will soon come to enrich her with his grace. The glorious St. Bonaventure, in order to revive in the hearts of sinners confidence in the protection of Mary, represents to us the sea in a tempest, in which sinners who have fallen from the bark of divine grace, tossed about by remorse of conscience, and by the fear of divine justice, without light and without a guide, have almost lost the breath of hope, and are nearly sinking in despair; at this critical moment the saint, pointing to Mary, who is commonly called "The star of the sea," raises his voice and exclaims: Oh poor, lost sinners, do not despair, lift your eyes to that beautiful star, take courage and trust, for she will guide you out of the tempest, and bring you to the port of safety.†

St. Bernard has said the same thing: If you would not be overwhelmed in the tempest, turn to this star, and call Mary to thy aid.‡ The devout Blosius also says that she is the only refuge for those who have offended God: the

* Rev. entr. c. 50.

† Respirate ad illam perditi peccatores, et perducet vos ad portum. In Psal. viii.

‡ Si non vis obrui procellis, respice stellam, voca Mariam. Hom. 2. sup. Miss.

asylum of all those who are tempted and afflicted.* This mother of mercy is all kindness and all sweetness, not only with the just, but also with sinners and those who are in despair; so that when she beholds them turning towards her, and sees that they are with sincerity seeking her help, she at once welcomes them, aids them, and obtains their pardon from her Son.† She neglects none, however unworthy they may be, and refuses to none her protection; she consoles all; and no sooner do they call upon her, than she hastens to their help.‡ With her gentleness she often wins their devotion, and raises those sinners who are most averse to God, and who are the most deeply plunged in the lethargy of their vices that she may dispose them to receive divine grace, and at last render themselves worthy of eternal glory.§ God has created this his beloved daughter with a disposition so kind and compassionate, that no one can hesitate to have recourse to her intercession.‖ The devout writer concludes with saying: It is not possible that any one can be lost, who with ex-

* Ipsa peccantium singulare refugium; ipsa omnium quos tentatio urget, aut calamitas, aut persecutio, tutissimum asylum.

† Tota mitis est et suavis, non solum justis, verum etiam peccatoribus, et desperatis. Quos, ut ad se ex corde clamare conspexerit, statim adjuvat, suscipit et Judici reconciliat.

‡ Nullum aspernens, nulli se negat; omnes consolatur, et tenuiter invocata, præsto adest.

§ Sua bonitate sæpe eos, qui Deo minus afficiuntur ad sui cultum blande allicit; potenterque excitat, ut per hujusmodi studium præparentur ad gratiam, et tandem apti reddantur regno cœlorum.

‖ Tuis a Deo facta est, ut nemo ad eam accedere trepidet.

actness and humility practises devotion to this divine mother.*

She is called a plane-tree: As a plane-tree was I exalted: "Quasi platanus exaltata sum."† Sinners may understand by this, that as the plane-tree gives a shelter to travellers, where they may take refuge from the heat of the sun, thus Mary, when she sees the anger of divine justice kindled against them, invites them to resort to the shelter of her protection. St. Bonaventure remarks that Isaias, in his day lamented, and said, "Behold, thou art angry and we have sinned. . . . .there is none that riseth up and taketh hold of thee;"‡ because Mary was not yet born into the world.§ But now, if God is offended with any sinner, and Mary undertakes to protect him, she restrains the Son from punishing him, and saves him.‖ Also, continues St. Bonaventure, no one can be found more fit than Mary to place her hand upon the sword of divine justice, that it may not descend upon the head of the sinner.¶ Richard of St. Laurence expresses the same thought, when he says: God lamented, before the birth of Mary, that there was no one to restrain him from punishing

* Fieri non potest, ut pereat, qui Mariæ sedulus et humilis cultor extiterit. In can. Vit. Spir. cap. 18.

† Eccli. xxiv. 19.

‡ Ecce tu iratus es, et peccavimus . . . . non est qui consurgat, et teneat te. Isa. lxiv. 5, 7.

§ Ante Mariam non fuit qui sic Deum detinere auderet.

‖ Detinet Filium ne peccatoribus percutiat.

¶ Nemo tam idoneus, qui gladio Domini manus objiciat.

the sinner; but Mary being born, she appeases him.*

St. Basil encourages sinners with the same thought, and says: Oh sinner, be not timid, but in all thy necessities flee to Mary, invoke her aid, and thou wilt always find her ready to assist thee, for it is the divine will that she should aid all men in all their necessities.† This mother of mercy has such a desire to save the most abandoned sinners, that she even goes to seek them; and if they have recourse to her, she will surely find a method of rendering them dear to God.

Isaac being desirous to eat the flesh of some venison, promised to give his benediction in exchange for it to Esau; but Rebecca wishing that her other son Jacob should receive this benediction, ordered him to bring her two kids, for she would prepare the food that Isaac loved. "Go thy way to the flock, bring me two kids."‡ St. Antoninus says that Rebecca was the type of Mary, who says to the angels, Bring me sinners (who are typified by the kids), that I may prepare them in such a manner (by obtaining for them sorrow and good resolutions) as to render them dear and acceptable to my Lord.§ The Abbot Francone, pursuing the same thought,

* Querebatur Dominus ante Mariam: Non est qui consurgat, et teneat me. Ezech. xxii. Donec inventa est Maria, quæ tenuit eum, donec emolliret. De Laud. Virg.

† Ne diffidas, peccator, sed in cunctis Mariam sequere et invoca, quam voluit Deus in cunctis subvenire. De Annunc. B. Virg.

‡ Pergens ad gregem, affer mihi duos hædos. Gen. xxvii. 9.

§ Part. 4, tit. 15, c. 2.

says, that Mary so well understands how to prepare these kids, that they not only equal, but sometimes even surpass the flavor of venison.*

The blessed Virgin herself revealed to St. Bridget, that no sinner in the world is so great an enemy to God, that if he has recourse to her and invokes her aid, does not return to God and is not restored to his favor. † And the same St. Bridget heard one day Jesus Christ saying to his mother, that she could obtain the divine favor even for Lucifer, if he would humble himself so far as to ask her help.‡ That proud spirit would never stoop to implore the protection of Mary, but if such a thing could happen, Mary would take pity upon him, and the power of her prayers would obtain from God his pardon and salvation. But what cannot happen to the devil may well happen to sinners who seek the help of this mother of mercy.

Noe's ark also prefigured Mary; because as in that all the animal creation found refuge, so under the mantle of Mary all sinners find protection, who have made themselves like the brutes by their vices and sensuality. With this difference, however, says a certain author: The brutes entered into the ark and remained brutes

* Vere sapiens mulier, quæ novit sic hædos condire, ut gratiam cervorum coæquent, aut etiam superent. Tom. 3, de Grat.

† Nullus ita abjectus a Deo, qui si me invocaverit, non reveriatur ad Deum.

‡ Etiam diabolo misericordiam exhiberes si humiliter peteret. Rev. l, 1, c. 6.

still; the wolf remained a wolf, the tiger a tiger.* But under the mantle of Mary the wolf becomes a lamb, the tiger a dove. St. Gertrude once saw Mary with her mantle outspread, and under it wild beasts of various kinds, leopards, lions, and bears; and the Virgin not only did not drive them from her but with her gentle hand kindly received them and caressed them. The saint understood that these wild beasts were miserable sinners who when they take refuge with Mary are received by her with sweetness and love.†

Justly, then, did St. Bernard say to the Virgin: Oh Lady, thou dost abhor no sinner, however abandoned and vile he may be, when he has recourse to thee; if he asks thy help thou wilt condescend to extend thy kind hand to draw him from the depths of despair.‡ Oh ever blessed and thanked be our God, oh most amiable Mary, who made thee so merciful and kind towards the most miserable sinners. Oh, wretched are those who do not love thee, and who, having it in their power to seek help of thee, do not trust in thee! He who does not implore the aid of Mary is lost; but who has ever been lost that had recourse to her?

It is related in Scripture that Booz permitted

* Quod arca animalia suscepit, animalia servavit. Paciucch. de. B. V.

† Ap. Blos. Mon. Spir. cap. 1.

‡ Tu peccatorem quantumcumque fœtidum non horres, si ad te suspiraverit, tu illum a desperationis baratro pia manu retrahis. Orat. Paneg. ad B. V.

the woman named Ruth to glean the ears that the reapers dropped and left behind them: "Colligebat spicas post terga metentium." * St. Bonaventure adds, that as Ruth found favor in the eyes of Booz, so Mary has found favor in the eyes of the Lord, and is permitted to glean after the reapers.† The reapers are the apostolic laborers, missionaries, preachers, and confessors, who toil through the day to gather and win souls to God. But there are some rebellious and obdurate souls who are left behind even by these reapers, and it is granted to Mary alone by her powerful intercession to save these abandoned ears. But unhappy are those who do not yield themselves to this sweet Lady! for they will be entirely lost and accursed! Blessed, on the other hand, are those who have recourse to this good mother! There is no sinner in the world, says the devout Blosius, so lost and sunk in sin, that Mary would abhor him and reject him. Ah, if such would seek her aid, this good mother could and would reconcile them to her Son, and obtain for them pardon.‡

With reason, then, oh my sweetest queen, does St. John of Damascus salute thee and call

* Ruth ii. 3.

† Ruth in oculis Booz, Maria in oculis Domini hanc gratiam invenit, ut ipsa spicas, idest animas a messoribus derelictas, colligere ad veniam possit. In Spe. cap. 8.

‡ Nullum tam execrabilem peccatorem orbis habet, quem ipsa abominetur, et a se repellat; quemque dilectissimo nato suo (modo suam precetur opem) non possit, sciat et velit reconciliare. Blos. de dictis, P. P. c. 5.

thee: "The hope of the despairing."* Justly does St. Laurence Justinian name thee: "The hope of evil-doers."† St. Augustine: "The only refuge of sinners."‡ St. Ephrem: "The secure haven for the shipwrecked."§ The same saint calls thee even by another appellation: "The protectress of the condemned."‖ Finally, St. Bernard, with reason, exhorts the desperate not to despair; whence, full of joy and tenderness towards this his most dear mother, he asks her lovingly: Oh Lady, who would not trust in thee, if thou dost thus relieve even the despairing? I do not doubt in the least, he adds, that if we always applied to thee we should obtain what we wish. In thee, then, let the despairing hope. ¶ St. Antoninus relates that a sinner finding himself in disgrace before God, imagined himself standing before the tribunal of Jesus Christ: the devil was accusing him and Mary defending him. The enemy presented against this poor criminal the catalogue of his offences, which, placed in the balance of divine justice far outweighed his good works; but what then did his great advocate do? She extended her kind hand and placed it in the other scale; it descended in favor of her suppliant, and thus it

* Salve spes desperatorum.

† Spes delinquentium. P. P. cap. 5.

‡ Unica spes peccatorum.

§ Naufragorum portus tutissimus.

‖ Protectrix damnatorum.

¶ Quis non sperabit in te, quæ etiam adjuvas desperatos? Non dubito, quod si ad te venerimus; habebimus quod volemus. In te ergo speret qui desperat. Sup. Salv. Reg.

was given him to understand, that she would obtain his pardon if he would change his life; and, indeed, after that vision he was converted and changed his life.

EXAMPLE.

The blessed John Erolto, who, through humility, called himself *the disciple*, relates,* that there was once a married man who lived in disgrace in the sight of God. His wife, a virtuous woman, not being able to induce him to abandon his vicious courses, entreated him that at least, while he was in so miserable a condition, he would offer this devotion to the mother of God, namely, to say a "Hail Mary" every time he passed before her altar. He accordingly began to practise this devotion. One night, when he was about to commit a sin, he saw a light, and, on closer observation, perceived that it was a lamp burning before a holy image of the blessed Virgin, who held the infant Jesus in her arms. He said a "Hail Mary," as usual; but what did he see? He saw the infant covered with wounds, and fresh blood flowing from them. Both terrified and moved in his feelings, he remembered that he himself too had wounded his Redeemer by his sins, and began to weep, but he observed that the child turned away from him. In deep confusion, he had recourse to the most holy Virgin, saying: "Mother of mercy, thy Son rejects me; I can find no advo-

* In Promptuar.

cate more kind and more powerful than thou, who art his mother; my queen, aid me, and pray to him in my behalf." The divine mother answered him from that image: "You sinners call me mother of mercy, but yet you do not cease to make me mother of misery, renewing the passion of my Son, and my dolors." But because Mary never sends away disconsolate those who cast themselves at her feet, she began to entreat her Son that he would pardon that miserable sinner. Jesus continued to show himself unwilling to grant such a pardon, but the holy Virgin, placing the infant in the niche, prostrated herself before him, saying: "My Son, I will not leave thy feet until thou hast pardoned this sinner." "My Mother," answered Jesus, "I can deny thee nothing; dost thou wish for his pardon? for love of thee I will pardon him. Let him come and kiss my wounds." The sinner approached, weeping bitterly, and as he kissed the wounds of the infant, they were healed. Then Jesus embraced him as a sign of pardon. He changed his conduct, led a holy life, and was ever full of love to the blessed Virgin, who had obtained for him so great a favor.

PRAYER.

I venerate, oh most pure Virgin Mary, thy most sacred heart, which was the delight and repose of God; a heart filled with humility, purity, and divine love. I, an unhappy sinner,

come to thee with a heart filled with uncleanness and wounds. Oh mother of mercy, do not on this account despise me, but let it excite thee to a greater compassion, and come to my help. Do not look for virtue or merits in me before thou grantest me thy aid ; I am lost, and only merit hell. Look at nothing, I pray thee, but the confidence I have in thee, and the desire I cherish of amending my life. Look at what Jesus has done and suffered for me, and then abandon me if thou canst. I offer to thee all the afflictions of his life, the cold that he suffered in the stable, his journey to Egypt, the blood that he shed, his poverty, toil, sweat, and sadness, the death he endured in thy presence, for love of me ; and, for the love of Jesus, promise to save me. Ah, my mother, I will not and I cannot fear that thou wilt cast me from thee, when I flee to thee and implore thy help. To fear this, would be unjust to thy mercy, which seeks the miserable to relieve them. Oh Lady, do not refuse thy compassion to him to whom Jesus has not refused his blood ; but the merits of this blood will not be applied to me, if thou dost not recommend me to God. From thee I hope salvation. I do not ask of thee riches, honors, or the other goods of earth ; I only ask of thee the grace of God, love for thy Son, the fulfilment of his will, and paradise, where I may love him eternally. Is it possible that thou wilt not hear me ? No, already thou dost hear me, as I hope ; already thou art praying for me, al-

ready thou art procuring me the favors I ask, already thou art receiving me under thy protection. My mother, do not leave me; continue, continue to pray for me, until thou seest me safe in heaven at thy feet, to bless and thank thee through all eternity. Amen.

CHAPTER IV.

AD TE CLAMAMUS EXULES FILII HEVÆ.

To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve.

SECTION I.

HOW READY MARY IS TO SUCCOR THOSE WHO CALL UPON HER.

We poor children of the unhappy Eve, guilty before God of her sin, and condemned to the same punishment, go wandering through this valley of tears, exiles from our country, weeping and afflicted by innumerable pains of body and soul! But blessed is he who in the midst of so many miseries turns to the consoler of the world, to the refuge of the unhappy, to the great mother of God, and devoutly invokes her and supplicates her! "Blessed is the man that heareth me, and that watcheth daily at my gates."* Blessed, says Mary, is he who listens to my counsels, and incessantly watches at the

* Beatus homo, qui audit me, et vigilat ad fores meas quotidie! Proverbs viii. 34.

door of my mercy, invoking my help and intercession! The holy Church instructs us her children with how great attention and confidence we should have continually recourse to this our loving protectress; ordaining special devotions to her, that during the year many festivals should be celebrated in her honor; that one day of the week should be especially consecrated to her; that every day, in the divine office, all ecclesiastics and members of religious orders should invoke her in behalf of the whole Christian people, and that three times a day all the faithful, at the sound of the bell, should salute her. This will suffice to show how, in all seasons of public calamity, the holy Church always directs her children to have recourse to the divine mother with novenas, prayers, processions, visits to her churches and altars. This, Mary herself wishes us to do, namely, always to invoke and supplicate her, not to ask our homage and praise, which are too poor in comparison with her merit, but that our confidence and devotion to her thus increasing, she may aid and console us more. She seeks such as approach her devoutly and reverently, says St. Bonaventure; these she cherishes, loves, and adopts as her children.*

The same St. Bonaventure says, that Mary was prefigured by Ruth, whose name, being interpreted, signifies *seeing, hastening*,† for Mary,

* Ipsa tales quærit qui ad eam devote et reverenter accedant; hos enim diligit, hos nutrit, hos in filios suscipit. P. 3, Stim. Div. Am. c. 16.

† Videns et festinans. In Spec.

seeing our miseries, hastens to aid us by her compassion.* To which Novarino adds, that Mary is so desirous to do us good, that she can bear no delay; and not being a miserly keeper of her favors, but the mother of mercy, she cannot restrain herself from dispensing, as soon as possible among her servants, the treasures of her liberality.†

Oh, how ready is this good mother to aid him who invokes her! "Thy two breasts are like two young roes."‡ Richard of St. Laurence, explaining this passage, says that the breasts of Mary readily, like the roe's, give the milk of mercy to those who ask it.§ The same author assures us that the mercy of Mary is bestowed on all who ask it, though they offer no prayer but a "Hail Mary." Hence, Novarino affirms, that the blessed Virgin not only hastens, but flies to aid those who have recourse to her. She, says this author, in exercising mercy, cannot but resemble God; for, as the Lord hastens to succor those who ask help from him, being very faithful to observe the promise which he has made to us—Ask, and you shall receive‖—so Mary, when she is invoked, immediately

* Videns enim nostram miseriam, est et festinans ad impendendam suam misericordiam.

† Nescit nectere moras benefaciendi cupida, nec gratiarum avara custos est; tardare nescit molimina misericordiæ mater beneficentiæ suæ thesauros in suos effusura. Nov. Umbr. Virg. c. 10, Exc. 75.

‡ Duo ubera tua sicut duo hinnulli capreæ. Cant. iv. 5.

§ Compressione levissima angelicæ salutationis larga stillabunt stillicidiæ.

‖ Petite et accipietis.,

hastens to help those who call upon her.* And by this is explained who was the woman of the Apocalypse, with two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the desert.† Ribeira explains these two wings to signify the love with which Mary always hastens to God.‡ But the blessed Amadeus says, remarking on this passage, that the wings of an eagle signify the velocity with which Mary, surpassing in swiftness the seraphs, always comes to the help of her children.§

We read in the Gospel of St. Luke, that when Mary went to visit St. Elizabeth, and bestow blessings on all her family, she was not slow, but travelled that whole journey with haste.‖ But we do not read that it was so on her return. For the same reason, it is said in the sacred Canticles, that the hands of Mary are turned.¶ For, as Richard of St. Laurence explains it, The art of turning is easier and quicker than other arts, so Mary is more ready than any other of the saints to aid her suppliants.** She has the greatest desire to console all,

* Alis utitur Deus; ut suis opituletur, statim advolat; alas sumit et Virgo, in nostri auxilium advolatura. Nov. c. 10, Excurs. 73.

† Et datæ sunt mulieri alæ duæ aquilæ magnæ ut volaret in desertum. Apoc. xii. 14.

‡ Pennas habet aquilæ, quia amore Dei volat.

§ Motu celerrimo seraphin alas excedens, ubique suis ut mater occurrit. Hom. 8, de Laud. Virg.

‖ Exurgens Maria abiit in montana cum festinatione. Luc. ii. 1–39.

¶ Manus illius tornatiles. Cant. v. 14.

** Sicut ars tornandi promptior est aliis artibus, sic Maria ad benefaciendum promptior est aliis sanctis. De Laud. Virg. l. 5.

and she scarcely hears herself invoked before she graciously receives the petition and comes to our aid.* Justly, then, St. Bonaventure calls Mary, The salvation of those who invoke her: "O salus te invocantium!" signifying, that to be saved it is sufficient to appeal to this divine mother, who, according to Richard of St. Laurence, is always ready to aid those who pray to her.† For, as St. Bernardine de Bustis says: This great Lady is more desirous to confer favors upon us than we are to receive them.‡

Neither should the multitude of our sins diminish our confidence that we shall be graciously heard by Mary, if we cast ourselves at her feet. She is the mother of mercy, and there would be no occasion for mercy, if there were no wretchedness to be relieved Therefore, as a good mother does not hesitate to apply a remedy to her child, however loathsome its disease, although the cure may be troublesome and disgusting; thus our good mother does not abandon us, when we recur to her however great may be the filth of our sins, which she comes to cure.§ This sentiment is taken from Richard of St. Laurence. And Mary intended to signify the same

* Omnes consolatur, et tenuiter invocata præsto adest. Blosius in Cant. Vit. Spir. c. 18.

† Inveniens semper paratam auxiliari.

‡ Plus vult illa facere tibi bonum, quam tu accipere concupiscas. Mar. 1, Serm. 5, de Nom. Mar.

§ Non enim mater hæc dedignatur peccatorem sicut nec bona mater filium scabiosum. Quia propter hoc factam se recolit misericordiæ genitricem. Ubi enim non est miseria, misericordia non habet locum. De Laud. Virg. lib. 4.

when she appeared to St. Gertrude, spreading her mantle to receive all who had recourse to her: at the same time it was given the saint to understand, that the angels are waiting to defend the devout suppliants of Mary from the assaults of hell.*

So great is the love and pity which this good mother has for us, that she does not wait for our prayers before giving us her aid. "She preventeth them that covet her, so that she first showeth herself unto them."† These words of wisdom St. Anselm applies to Mary, and says that she anticipates those who desire her protection. By this we are to understand, that she obtains many graces from God for us before we ask them from her. Therefore Richard of St. Victor says: Mary is called the moon: Pulchra ut luna;‡ not only because she hastens as the moon to shine on those who seek her light,§ but because she so earnestly desires our welfare that in our necessities she anticipates our prayers, and in her compassion she is more prompt to help us than we are to have recourse to her.‖ For, adds the same Richard, the breast of Mary is so full of pity that she scarcely knows our miseries before she offers us the milk of her mercy, neither can this gracious queen perceive

* Rev. lib. 4, cap. 49.

† Præoccupat, qui se concupiscunt, ut illis se prius ostendat. C. vi. 4.

‡ In Cant. c. 23.

§ Velocitate præstat.

‖ Velocius occurrit ejus pietas, quam invocetur, et causas miserorum anticipat. Loc. cit.

the necessities of any soul without relieving it.*

And truly, Mary manifested to us while she was on earth, in the nuptials of Cana,† her great compassion for our sufferings, which prompts her to relieve them before we pray to her. This kind mother saw the trouble of that pair who were mortified to find that their wine had failed at the wedding banquet; and without being requested, moved only by her compassionate heart, which cannot look upon the afflictions of others without pity, prayed her Son, to console them by merely mentioning to him the necessities of the family: They have no wine: ‡ "Vinum non habent." After which, her Son, to comfort that family, and still more to satisfy the compassionate heart of his mother, performed, as she desired, the well-known miracle of changing the water contained in vases into wine. Novarino here remarks, that if Mary, though unasked, is so ready to aid us in our necessities, how much more so will she be when we invoke her and implore her aid!§

If any one doubts that he shall be assisted by Mary when he has recourse to her, let him listen to the words of Innocent III.: Who has ever invoked this sweet Lady, and has not been heard by

* Adeo replentur ubera tua misericordia, ut alterius miseriæ notitia tacta, lac fundant misericordiæ. Nec possis miserias scire, et non subvenire. In Cant. c. 23.

† Luc. ii.

‡ Joan. ii. 3

§ Si tam prompta ad auxilium currit non quæsita, quid quæsita præstitura est. C. 10, Ex. 27.

her?* Who, oh holy Virgin, exclaims the blessed Eutychian, has ever sought thy powerful protection, which can relieve the most miserable and rescue the most degraded, and has been abandoned by thee? No, this has never happened, and never will happen.† Let him be silent concerning thy mercy, oh blessed Virgin, whose necessities have been neglected by thee after he has implored thy aid.‡

Sooner will heaven and earth be destroyed, says the devout Blosius, than Mary fail to aid those who, with a pure intention, recommend themselves to her and put their confidence in her.§ And to increase our confidence, St. Anselm adds, that when we have recourse to this divine mother, we may not only be sure of her protection, but that sometimes we shall be sooner heard and saved by invoking her holy name than that of Jesus our Saviour.‖ And he gives this reason: Because it belongs to Christ, as our judge, to punish, but to Mary, as our advocate, to pity.¶ By this he would give us to understand, that we sooner find salvation by recur-

* Quis invocavit eam et non est auditus ab ipsa? Serm. 2, de Ass. B. V.

† Quis unquam, O Beata, fideliter omnipotentem tuam rogavit opem, et fuit derelictus? Revera nullus unquam. In vita S. Theoph.

‡ Sileat misericordiam tuam, Virgo beata, qui in necessitatibus te invocatam meminerit defuisse. Serm. 1, de Ass.

§ Citius cœlum cum terra perierint, quam Maria aliquem serio se implorantem sua ope destituat. In Spec. c. 12.

‖ Velocior nonnunquam est nostra salus, invocato nomine Mariæ, quam invocato nomine Jesu. De Exc. V. c. 6.

¶ Quia ad Christum, tanquam judicem, pertinet etiam punire; ad Virginem tanquam patronam nonnisi misereri. Loc. cit.

ring to the mother than the Son; not because Mary is more powerful than her Son to save us, for we know that Jesus is our only Saviour, and that by his merits alone he has obtained and does obtain for us salvation; but because when we have recourse to Jesus, considering him also as the judge to whom it belongs to punish the ungrateful, we may lose the confidence necessary to be heard; but going to Mary, who holds no other office than that of exercising compassion towards us as mother of mercy, and defending us as our advocate our confidence will be more secure and greater. We ask many things of God and do not obtain them; we ask them from Mary and obtain them; how is this? Nicephorus answers: This does not happen because Mary is more powerful than God, but because God has seen fit thus to honor his mother.*

How consoling is the promise that our Lord himself made on this subject to St. Bridget. We read in her revelations, that one day this saint heard Jesus speaking with his mother, and that he said to her: "Mother, ask of me whatever thou wilt, for I will refuse nothing that thou dost ask;† and be assured," he added, "that all those who for love of thee seek any favor, although they are sinners, if they desire to amend. I promise to hear them."‡ The same

* Multa petuntur a Deo, et non obtinentur; multa petuntur a Maria et obtinentur; non quia potentior sed quia Deus eam decrevit sic honorare. Ap. P. Pep. Grandez, etc.

† Nulla erit petitio tua in me, quæ non audiatur. Lib. 1, 80.

‡ Et per te omnes, qui per te petunt misericordiam, cum voluntate se emendandi, gratiam habebunt. Loc. cit.

thing was revealed to St. Gertrude, who heard our Redeemer himself say to Mary, that he had in his omnipotence permitted her to exercise mercy towards sinners who invoke her, in whatever manner it should please her.*

Every one invoking this mother of mercy may then say, with St. Augustine: "Remember, oh most compassionate Lady! that since the beginning of the world there never has been any one abandoned by thee. Therefore pardon me if I say that I do not wish to be the first sinner who has sought thy aid in vain."†

EXAMPLE.

St. Francis of Sales, as we read in his life, efficaciously experienced the power of this prayer. At seventeen years of age he was living in Paris, engaged in study, and at the same time wholly devoted to pious exercises and holy love of God, which gave him a perpetual foretaste of heavenly joy. At this time the Lord, to try his faith, and attach him more strongly to his love, permitted the devil to represent to him that his efforts were in vain, because he was already condemned by the divine decree. The darkness and dryness in which it pleased God to leave him at the time for he was insensible to all con-

* Ex omnipotentia mea, Mater, tibi concessi propitiationem omnium peccatorum, qui devote invocant tuæ pietatis auxilium, qualicumque modo placeat tibi. Ap. Pep. loc. cit.

† Memorare piissima Maria, a sæculo non esse auditum, quamquam ad tua præsidia confugientem esse derelictum.

soling thoughts of the divine goodness, caused this temptation to have more power over the heart of the holy youth; so that through great fear and desolation he lost his appetite, sleep, color, and cheerfulness, and excited the compassion of all those who looked upon him.

Whilst this horrible conflict lasted, the saint could conceive no other thoughts and utter no other words but those of sorrow and distrust. "Shall I, then," he said, as it is related in his life, "be deprived of the favor of my God, who hitherto has shown himself so gracious and so kind to me? Oh love! oh beauty! to which I have consecrated all my affections, shall I never more enjoy your consolations? Oh Virgin mother of God, the most beautiful of all the daughters of Jerusalem, am I then never to see thee in paradise? Ah, my Lady! if I am never to see thy lovely face, do not permit me to be forced to blaspheme and curse thee in hell." These were the tender sentiments of that afflicted heart, still so enamored of God and the Virgin. This temptation lasted for a month, but at length the Lord was pleased to deliver him from it by means of the consolor of the world, most holy Mary, to whom the saint had before made a vow of chastity, and upon whom he used to say he had placed all his hopes. One evening, on returning home, he entered a church, where he saw a small tablet suspended from the wall; he found written on it the prayer of St. Augustine above mentioned: "Remember, oh most

merciful Mary! that no one, in any age, was ever known to have fled to thee for help and found himself abandoned." He prostrated himself before the altar of the divine mother, and recited with deep feeling this prayer; he renewed his vow of chastity, promised to recite daily the rosary, and then added: "Oh my queen, be my advocate with thy Son, whom I dare not approach. My mother, if in the other world I should be so unhappy as not to be able to love my Lord, whom I know is so worthy to be loved, at least obtain for me that I may love him as much as I can in this world. This is the grace that I ask of thee, and from thee I hope for it." Thus he supplicated the Virgin, and then abandoned himself to the divine mercy, resigning himself entirely to the will of God. But hardly had he finished his prayer, when by his most sweet mother he was suddenly freed from temptation; he immediately recovered his interior peace, and with it health of body, and from that time continued to live a most devout servant of Mary, whose praises and mercies he never ceased to proclaim in his preaching and his writings to the end of his life.

PRAYER.

Oh mother of God! oh queen of angels! oh hope of men! listen to him who invokes thee and has recourse to thee. Behold me to-day prostrate at thy feet; I, a miserable slave of hell, consecrate myself to thee as thy servant forever, of-

fering myself to serve and honor thee to the ut most of my power all the days of my life. I know that thy honor is not increased by the service of so vile and wretched a slave as I am, who have so grievously offended thy Son and my Redeemer Jesus. But if thou wilt accept one so unworthy as I for thy servant, and changing him by thy intercession, wilt render him worthy, thy own compassion will confer upon thee that honor which I, vile as I am, cannot render thee. Accept me, then, and do not reject me, oh my mother! The eternal Word came from heaven upon earth to seek the lost sheep, and to save them, became thy Son. And wilt thou despise a poor sheep, who comes to thee to help him find Jesus? The price has already been paid for my salvation; my Saviour has shed his blood, which is enough to save infinite worlds. It only remains this blood should be applied to me; and to thee it belongs, oh blessed Virgin! to thee it belongs, as St. Bernard says, to bestow the merits of this blood on whomsoever it may please thee. To thee it belongs, as St. Bonaventure also says, to save whom thou wilt.* Oh my queen, help me, then! my queen, save me! To you this day I commit my soul; and do thou secure its safety. Oh, salvation of those who invoke thee! I will exclaim with the same saint, save m

* Quem ipsa vis salvus erit.
† O salus te invocantium.

SECTION II.

HOW POWERFUL IS MARY IN PROTECTING THOSE WHO INVOKE HER IN TEMPTATIONS OF THE DEVIL.

Not only most holy Mary is queen of heaven and of the saints, but also of hell and the devils, for she has bravely triumphed over them by her virtues. From the beginning of the world God predicted to the infernal serpent the victory and the empire which our queen would obtain over him, when he announced to him that a woman would come into the world who should conquer him. "I will put enmities between thee and the woman; she shall crush thy head."* And what woman was this enemy if not Mary, who, with her beautiful humility and holy life, always conquered him and destroyed his forces? St. Cyprian affirms that the mother of our Lord Jesus Christ was promised in that woman :† and hence he remarks, that God did not use the words I put, but I will put, lest the prophecy should seem to appertain to Eve.‡ He said, I will put enmity between thee and the woman, to signify that this his vanquisher was not the living Eve, but must be another woman descending from her, who was to bring to our first parents greater blessings, as St. Vincent Ferrer says, than those they had lost by

* Inimicitias ponam inter te et mulierem; ipsa conteret caput tuum. Gen. iii. 15.

† Mater Domini Jesu Christi in illa muliere promissa est.

‡ Non pono, sed ponam ne ad Evam pertinere videatur.

their sin.* Mary, then, is this great and strong woman who has conquered the devil, and has crushed his head by subduing his pride, as the Lord added : "She shall crush thy head."† Some of the commentators doubt whether these words refer to Mary or to Jesus Christ, because in the Septuagint version we read : "He shall crush thy head."‡ But in our Vulgate, which is the only version approved by the Council of Trent, it is She, and not He. And thus St. Ambrose, St. Jerome, St. Augustine, St. John Chrysostom, and many others have understood it. However this may be, it is certain that the Son by means of the mother, or the mother by means of the Son, has vanquished Lucifer ; so that this proud spirit, as St. Bernard tells us, has been ignominiously overpowered and crushed by this blessed Virgin.§ Hence as a slave conquered in war, he is forced always to obey the commands of this queen. St. Bruno says, that Eve, by yielding to the serpent, brought into the world death and darkness ; but that the blessed Virgin, by conquering the devil brought us life and light : and she has bound him so that he cannot move to do the least harm to her servants.‖

* Parentibus primis Virginem ab ipsis processuram; quæ afferret majus bonum quam ipsi perdiderunt. Serm. 2, de Nat. Virg.

† Ipsa conteret caput tuum. ‡ Ipse conteret caput tuum.

‡ Sub Mariæ pedibus conculcatus et contritus miserani patitur servitutem. Serm. in Sign. Magn.

§ Et Eva mors, et caligo; in Maria, vita consistit, et lux. Illa a diabolo victa est; hæc diabolum vicit et ligavit. Ap. Scala Franc. p. 4, c. 10.

Richard of St. Laurence gives a beautiful explanation to these words of Proverbs; "The hearts of her husband trusteth in her, and he shall have no need of spoils.* Richard says: The heart of her husband, that is, Christ, trusts in her, and he shall have no need of spoils, for she will endow him with the spoils which she has taken from the devil.† God has intrusted the heart of Jesus, as à Lapide expresses it, to the care of Mary, that she may procure for it the love of men; and thus he will not be in need of spoils, that is, of the conquest of souls, for she will enrich him with those souls of which she despoils hell, and which she has rescued from the demons from her powerful aid.

It is well known that the palm is the emblem of victory, and for this reason our queen has been placed on a high throne in the sight of all potentates, as a palm, the sign of certain victory, which all can promise themselves who have recourse to her. "I was exalted like a palm-tree in Cades."‡ That is, for a defence § as blessed Albertus Magnus says: Oh, my children, Mary seems to say to us with these words, when the enemy assails you, lift your eyes to me, behold me and take courage; for in me, who defends you, you will behold, at the same time, your victory. So

* Confidit in ea cor viri sui, et spoliis non indigebit. Prov. xxxi. 11.

† Confidit in ea cor viri sui, scilicet Christi. Et spoliis non indigebit; ipsa enim quasi ditat sponsum suum, quibus spoliat diabolum.

‡ Quasi palma exaltata sum in Cades. Eccli. xxiv. 18.

§ Scilicet ad defendendum.

that recourse to Mary is the most certain means of overcoming all the assaults of hell; for she, as St. Bernardine of Sienna says, is queen over hell, and ruler of the spirits of evil, for she controls and conquers them.* And therefore Mary is called terrible against the power of hell, as an army set in array. "Terrible as an army set in array."† Set in array, because she knows how to array her powers, that is, her compassion and her prayers, to the confusion of the enemy and the benefit of her servants, who, in their temptations, invoke her powerful aid.

"As the vine I have brought forth a pleasant odor."‡ "I, like the vine, as the Holy Spirit puts it in her mouth to say, have given fruit of sweet odor." "It is said," adds St, Bernard, on this passage, "that every venomous reptile shuns the flowering vines."§ As from vines all poisonous serpents flee, thus the demons flee from those fortunate souls in whom they perceive the odor of devotion to Mary. On this account she also is called a cedar: "I was exalted like a cedar in Libanus,"‖ not only because as the cedar is free from corruption, so Mary is free from sin, but also because, as Cardinal Hugo

* Beata Virgo dominatur in regno inferni. Dicitur igitur domina dæmonum, quasi domans dæmones. Serm. 3, de Glor. Nom, Mar.

† Terribilis ut castrorum acies ordinata. Cant. vi, 3.

‡ Ego quasi vitis fructificavi suavitatem odoris. Eccli. xxiv. 23.

§ Aiunt de florescentibus vitibus omne reptile venantium excedere loco. Serm. 60, in Cant.

‖ Quasi cedrus exaltata sum in Libano. Eccli. xxiv. 17.

remarks upon this passage, as the cedar with its perfume puts serpents to flight, so that Mary with her sanctity puts to flight the devils.*

Victories were gained in Judea by means of the ark. Thus Moses conquered his enemies. "When the ark was lifted up, Moses said, Arise, oh Lord, and let thy enemies be scattered."† Thus Jericho was conquered; thus were the Philistines conquered; "for the ark of God was there."‡ It is well known that this ark was the type of Mary. As the ark contained the manna, thus Mary contained Jesus, whom the manna also prefigured, and by means of this ark, victories were gained over the enemies of earth and over hell.§ Wherefore St. Bernardine of Sienna says that when Mary, the ark of the New Testament, was crowned queen of heaven, the power of hell over men was weakened and overthrown.‖

"Oh, how the devils in hell," says St. Bonaventure, "tremble at Mary and her great name!"¶ The saint compares these enemies to those of whom Job makes mention and says: "He diggeth through houses in the dark . . . .

* Cedrus odore suo fugat serpentes, et beata Virgo dæmones.

† Cum elevaretur arca, dicebat Moyses; Surge Domine, et dissipentur inimici tui. Num. x. 33.

‡ Erat enim ibi arca Dei. 1, Reg. xiv. 18.

§ Arca continens manna, idest Christum, est B. Virgo, quæ victoriam contra homines et dæmones largitur. Cornel. a Lap.

‖ Quando elevata fuit Virgo gloriosa a celestia regna, dæmonis potentia imminuta est et dissipata. Tom. 3, de B. V. Serm. 11.

¶ O quam tremenda est Maria dæmonibus. Spec. Virg. c. 3.

If the morning suddenly appear, it is to them the shadow of death."* Thieves enter houses in the dark to rob them, but when the dawn comes they flee, as if the image of death appeared to them. In the same manner, as St. Bonaventure expresses it, the demons enter into the soul in times of darkness, that is, when the soul is obscured by ignorance; they dig through the houses of our minds in the darkness of ignorance; but then, he adds, as soon as the grace and the mercy of Mary enter the soul, this beautiful aurora dissipates the darkness, and the infernal enemies flee as at the approach of death.† Oh, blessed is he who always, in his conflicts with hell, invokes the beautiful name of Mary!

In confirmation of this it was revealed to St. Bridget that God has given Mary such power over all evil spirits, that whenever they assail any of her servants who implore her aid, at the slightest sign from her they flee far away in terror, preferring that their pains should be redoubled rather than that Mary should domineer over them in this manner.‡

* Perfodit in tenebris domos . . . . Si subito apparuerit aurora; arbitrantur umbram mortis. Job xxiv. 16, 17.

† Perfodiunt in tenebris ignorantiæ domos mentium nostrarum. Si subito supervenerit aurora, idest Mariæ gratia, et misericordia, sic fugiunt, sicut omnes fugiunt mortem. In Spec. Virg.

‡ Super omnes etiam malignos spiritus ipsam sic potentem effecit, quod quotiescumque ipsi hominem Virginis auxilium implorantem impugnaverint, ad ipsius Virginis nutum illico pavidi procul diffugiunt; volentes potius suas pœnas multiplicari, quam ejusdem Virginis potentiam super se taliter dominari. Serm. Ang. c. 20.

A Lapide remarks upon the words with which the divine spouse praises his beloved bride, when he calls her the lily, and says that as the lily is among thorns, so is his beloved among the other daughters ;* that, as the lily is a remedy against serpents and poisons, so the invocation of Mary is a special remedy for overcoming all temptations, particularly those of impurity, as they who have tried it have universally experienced.†

St. John of Damascus said, and every one may say the same who is so happy as to be devoted to this great queen : Oh, mother of God, if I trust in thee, I shall surely not be vanquished ; for, defended by thee, I will pursue my enemies, and opposing to them thy protection and thy powerful support as a shield, I shall surely conquer them.‡ James the Monk, reputed a doctor among the Greek fathers, discoursing of Mary to our Lord. says : Thou, oh my Lord, hast given us this mother for a powerful defence against all our enemies.§

It is related in the Old Testament that the Lord guided his people from Egypt to the

* Sicut lilium inter spinas, sic amica mea inter filias. Cant. ii. 2.

† Sicut lilium valet inter serpentes et venena, sic beatæ Virginis invocatio singulare est remedium in omni tentatione, præsertim libidinis, ut experientia constat.

‡ Insuperabilem spem tuam habens, O Deipara, servabor, Persequar inimicos meos, solam habens ut thoracem protectionem tuam, et omnipotens auxilium tuum. In Annunc. Dei Gen.

§ Tu arma omni vi belli potentiora, trophæumque invictum præstitisti.

promised land, by day in a pillar of clouds, by night in a pillar of fire.* This pillar, now of clouds, now of fire, says Richard of St. Laurence, was a type of Mary and her double office, which she exercises continually in our behalf; as a cloud she protects us from the heat of divine justice, and as fire she protects us from demons.† Fire, as St. Bonaventure adds, for as wax melts at the approach of fire, thus the evil spirits lose all power in the presence of those souls who often call upon the name of Mary, and devoutly invoke her, and more than all, strive to imitate her.‡

Oh, how the devils tremble, exclaims St. Bernard, if they only hear the name of Mary uttered !§ As men, says Thomas à Kempis, fall to the earth through fear, when a thunderbolt strikes near them, so fall prostrate the devils when but the name of Mary is heard.‖ How many noble victories have the servants of Mary not gained over these enemies by the power of

* Per diem in columna nubis, et per noctem in columna ignis. Exod. xiii. 21.

† Ecce duo officia, ad quæ data est nobis Maria, scilicet, ut nos protegat a calore solis justitiæ, tamquam nubes, et tamquam ignis; ut omnes nos protegat contra diabolum. Lib. 7, de Laud. Virg.

‡ Fluunt sicut cera a facie ignis, ubi inveniunt crebram hujus nominis recordationem, devotam invocationem, solicitam imitationem. In Spec.

§ In nomine Mariæ omne genuflectitur, et dæmones non solum pertimescunt, sed, audita hac voce, contremiscunt. Serm. sup. Miss.

‖ Expavescunt cœli reginam spiritus maligni et diffugiant,

her most holy name! Thus St. Anthony of Padua conquered them, thus the blessed Henry Suso, thus many other lovers of Mary. It is related in the accounts of the missions to Japan that a great number of demons appeared in the form of ferocious animals to a certain Christian of that country, to alarm him and threaten him, but he spoke to them in these words: "I have no arms with which to terrify you; if the Most High permits it, do with me according to your pleasure. Meanwhile I use as my defence the most sweet names of Jesus and Mary." Hardly had he uttered these words, when behold, at the sound of those fearful names, the earth opened and those proud spirits were swallowed up. St. Anselm also asserts that he had seen and heard many persons who at the mention of the name of Mary were delivered from their dangers.*

Very glorious, oh Mary, and wonderful, exclaims St. Bonaventure, is thy great name. Those who art mindful to utter it at the hour of death, have nothing to fear from hell, for the devils at once abandon the soul when they hear the name of Mary.† And the saint adds, that an earthly enemy does not so greatly fear

audito nomine ejus, velut ab igne, tamquam tonitru de cœlo factum sit, prosternuntur ad sanctæ Mariæ vocabulum. L. 4, ad Nov.

* Sæpe vidimus et audivimus plurimos homines in suis periculis nominis recordari Mariæ, et illico omnis periculi malum evasisse. S. Ans. de Exc. Virg. c. 6.

† Gloriosum et admirabile est nomen tuum O Maria; qui illud re-

a great army, as the powers of hell fear the name and protection of Mary.* Thou, oh Lady, says St. Germanus, by the invocation alone of thy most powerful name, dost render thy servants secure from all the assaults of the enemy.† Oh, if Christians were mindful in temptations to invoke with confidence the name of Mary, it is certain that they would never fall; for, as blessed Alanus remarks, at the thunder of that great name, the devil flees and hell trembles.‡ This heavenly queen herself revealed to St. Bridget, that even from the most abandoned sinners, who had wandered the farthest from God, and were most fully possessed by the devil, the enemy departs as soon as he hears her most powerful name invoked by them, if they do it with a true intention of amending.§ But the Virgin added, that if the soul does not amend, and with contrition quit its sins, the demons immediately return to it and hold it in their possession.‖

tinent non expavescunt in puncto mortis; nam dæmones audientes hoc nomen Mariæ statim relinquunt animam. In Psalt. B. V.

* Non sic timent hostes visibiles castrorum multitudinem copiosam, sicut æreæ potestates Mariæ vocabulum, et patrocinium. Loc. cit.

† Tu servos tuos contra hostis invasiones, sola tui nominis invocatione tutos servas. Serm. de Zona. Virg.

‡ Satan fugit, infernus contremiscit, cum dico Ave Maria.

§ Omnes dæmones audientes hoc nomen, Maria, statim relinquunt animam quasi territi. L. 1, Rev. c. 9.

‖ Et revertuntur ad eam, nisi aliqua emendatio subsequatur. Lib. 1. Rev. c. 9.

EXAMPLE.

In Reisberg there lived a Canon regular named Arnold, who was very devoted to the blessed Virgin. Being at the point of death, he received the sacraments, and calling his religious to him, begged them not to leave him at the last moment. Scarcely had he said this, when he began to tremble violently and roll his eyes; cold sweat fell from him, and with an agitated voice he exclaimed: "Do you not see those demons who would seize me and carry me to hell?" Then he cried: "My brothers, invoke for me the help of Mary; I trust in her that she will give me the victory." They immediately began to recite the Litany of our Lady, and at the words, Holy Mary, pray for him, "Sancta Maria, ora pro eo," the dying man cried: "Repeat, repeat the name of Mary, for I am even now at the tribunal of God." He stopped for a moment, and then added: "It is true that I did it, but I have done penance for it." Then turning to the Virgin, he said: "Oh Mary, I shall be delivered if thou wilt help me." The demons soon after made another attack, but he defended himself by blessing himself with the crucifix, and invoking Mary. Thus he passed the whole night, but when morning dawned, Arnold, restored to serenity, joyfully said: "Mary, my Lady, and my refuge, has obtained for me pardon and salvation." Then beholding the Virgin, who summoned him to fol-

low her, he said: "I come, oh Lady, I come." He made an effort to rise, but not being able to follow her with the body, gently expiring, he followed her with his soul, as we hope, to the blessed kingdom of glory.*

PRAYER.

Behold at thy feet, oh Mary my hope, a poor sinner who many times, through his own fault, has been the slave of hell. I know that I have often been conquered by the devil, because I have neglected to recur to thee, oh my refuge. If I had always sought thy protection, if I had invoked thee, I should never have fallen. I hope, oh my Lady, most worthy of love, that by thy help I have escaped the powers of hell, and that God has pardoned me. But I tremble for the future, lest I again fall into their power. I know that these enemies of mine have not lost all hope of reconquering me, and at this moment they are preparing new assaults and temptations. Oh, my queen and refuge, aid me. Shelter me beneath thy mantle, let me not become again their slave. I know that thou wilt succor me and give me victory whenever I invoke thee. I fear only that in my temptations I may forget thee, and neglect to call upon thee. This, then, is the grace, oh most holy Virgin, that I seek and wish from thee, that I may always remember

* Father Auriemma, Affetti Scambiev. Tom. i. c. 7.

thee, and especially when I find myself in conflict with the enemy; let me not then fail to invoke thee often with the words: "Oh Mary, help me, help me, oh Mary." And when at length the day of my last conflict with hell, the day of my death arrives, oh, my queen, powerfully assist me then, and remind me thyself to invoke thee more frequently, with the voice or with the heart, that expiring with thy most sweet name, and that of thy son Jesus on my lips, I may go to bless and praise thee, and never leave thy feet in paradise through all eternity. Amen.

CHAPTER V.

AD TE SUSPIRAMUS GEMENTES ET FLENTES IN HAC LACRYMARUM VALLE.

To thee do we send up our sighs, groaning and weeping in this valley of tears.

SECTION I.

THE NEED WE HAVE OF THE INTERCESSION OF MARY FOR OUR SALVATION.

To invoke and pray to the saints, especially to the queen of saints, most holy Mary, that they may obtain for us, by their intercession, the divine favor, is not only a lawful but a useful and holy practice, and this is of faith, being established by the Councils, against heretics, who condemn it as injurious to Jesus Christ, who is our only mediator; but if a Jeremias, after his death, prays for Jerusalem*; if the elders of the Apocalypse present to God the prayers of the saints; if a St. Peter promises his disciples to remember them after his death; if a St. Stephen prays for his persecutors; if a St. Paul prays for his companions; if, in a word, the

* Mach. xv. 14.

saints pray for us, why may we not implore the saints to intercede for us? St. Paul commends himself to the prayers of his disciples: Pray for us: "Orate pro nobis."* St. James exhorts the Christians to pray for each other: "Pray for one another, that ye may be saved." † We may then do likewise.

No one will deny that Jesus Christ is the only mediator of justice, and that by his merits he has obtained for us reconciliation with God. But, on the other hand, it is impious to deny that God is pleased to grant favors at the intercession of the saints, and especially of Mary his mother, whom Jesus desires so much to see loved and honored by us. Every one knows that honor paid to a mother redounds to her children.‡ Hence St. Bernard says, let not any one think that by greatly praising the mother he will throw into the shade the glories of the Son; for the more he honors the mother, so much more he honors the Son.§ St. Ildephonsus says, that all the honor which is paid to the mother and the queen, is rendered to the Son and king. ‖ And there is no doubt that on account of the merits of Jesus, the great privilege has been granted to Mary to be the mediatrix of our salvation;

* Thess. 1, c. v. 25.

† Orate pro invicem ut salvemini. C. v. 16.

‡ Gloria filiorum Patres eorum. Prov. xvii. 6.

§ Non est dubium, quicquid in laudibus matris profermus, ad filium pertinere. Hom. 4, Sup. Miss.

‖ Refunditur in filium quod impenditur matri, transfunditur honor in regem, qui defertur in famulatum reginæ.

not, indeed, mediatrix of justice, but of grace and intercession, as she is called by St. Bonaventure.* St. Lawrence Justinian also says: Can she be otherwise than full of grace, who has been made the ladder of paradise, the gate of heaven, the most true mediatrix between God and man?†

Wherefore St. Anselm well remarks, that when we implore the holy Virgin to obtain graces for us, it is not that we distrust the divine mercy, but rather that we distrust our own unworthiness, and commend ourselves to Mary that her merits may compensate for our unworthiness.‡

It cannot be doubted, therefore, except by those who are deficient in faith, that it is a useful and holy thing to have recourse to the intercession of Mary. But the point that we here propose to prove is, that the intercession of Mary is even necessary for our salvation: necessary, to speak properly, not indeed absolutely, but morally. And we affirm that this necessity arises from the will of God itself, who has ordained that all the favors which he dispenses should pass through the hands of Mary, according to the opinion of St. Bernard, which may well be con-

* Maria fidelissima mediatrix nostræ salutis.

† Quomodo non est plena gratia, quæ effecta est paradisi scala, cœli janua, Dei atque hominum verissima mediatrix? Serm. de Annunc.

‡ Ut dignitas intercessoris suppleat inopiam nostram. Unde Virginem interpellare, non est de divina misericordia diffidere, sed de propria indignitate formidare. De Exc. V. c. 6.

sidered at the present day the common opinion of doctors and divines, as the author of "The kingdom of Mary" has already called it It is embraced by Vega, Mendoza, Paciucchelli, Segneri, Poiré, Crasset, and innumerable other learned authors. Even Father Noel Alexander, an author usually very reserved in his assertions, declares it to be the will of God that we receive all favors through the intercession of Mary.* In confirmation of this, he quotes the celebrated passage of St. Bernard: This is the will of him who would have us receive all things through Mary.† The same opinion is held by Father Contensone who, explaining the words of Jesus Christ of the cross to John, behold thy mother, "Ecce mater tua," says: It is as if he said, no one shall partake of my blood except by the intercession of my mother. My wounds are fountains of grace, but to none can their streams be conveyed except by the channel of Mary. Oh John, my disciple, even as thou lovest my mother, so shalt thou be loved by me.‡

The statement that whatsoever we receive from the Lord comes to us by means of Mary, does not find favor with a certain modern au-

* Qui vult ut omnia bona ab ipso expectemus, potentissima Virginis matris intercessione impetranda, cum eam, ut par est, invocamus. Epist. 76, in calce tom. 4, Moral.

† Sic est voluntas ejus, qui totum nos habere voluit per Mariam.

‡ Quasi diceret, Nullus sanguinis mei particeps erit, nisi intercessione matris meæ. Vulnera gratiarum fontes sunt, sed ad nullos derivabuntur rivi, nisi per Mariæ canalem. Joannes discipule, tantum a me amaberis, quantum eam amaveris. Theol. mentis, et cord. tom. 2, l. 10, D. 4, c. 1.

thor, who, although he treats with much piety and learning of true and false devotion, yet speaking of the devotion towards the divine mother, has shown himself very sparing in granting her the glory that a St. Germanus, a St. Anselm, a St. John of Damascus, a St. Bonaventure, a St. Antoninus, a St. Bernardine of Sienna, the venerable Abbot of Celles, and so many other doctors, have not hesitated to attribute to her who have not scrupled to declare that for the above-mentioned reason the intercession of Mary is not only useful, but necessary. The above-named author says that this proposition, namely, that God grants no favor except through Mary, is an hyperbole and an exaggeration which has escaped from the mouth of some saints in a moment of fervor, and properly speaking, is to be understood only in the sense that through Mary we have received Jesus Christ, by whose merits we receive all graces. Otherwise, he continues, it would be an error to believe that God could not grant graces, without the intercession of Mary, since the apostle says: "There is one God and one Mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus."* So far the above-named author.

But with his leave I will suggest to him what he himself in his book teaches me, that the mediation of justice by means of merit, and the mediation of grace by means of prayer, are very different things. Thus it is also one thing to say that God cannot. another to say he will not

* 1 Tim. ii. 5.

grant favors without the intercession of Mary. We willingly acknowledge that God is the fountain of every good, and absolute Lord of all graces and that Mary is only a pure creature who, through grace, receives whatever she obtains from God. But who can deny it to be reasonable and proper to assert that God, in order to exalt this noble creature, who, more than all other creatures, has loved and honored him in her life, having chosen her for the mother of his Son the Redeemer of the world, has also seen fit to dispense through her hands all the graces which are to be granted to redeemed souls? We acknowledge that Jesus Christ is the only mediator of justice, as we have stated above, who by his merits obtains for us grace and salvation; but we affirm that Mary is the mediatrix of grace, and although whatever she obtains, she obtains through the merits of Jesus Christ, and because she prays and asks for it in the name of Jesus Christ, yet whatever favors we ask are all obtained through her intercession.

In this there is certainly nothing opposed to the sacred doctrines; on the contrary, it is entirely conformed to the sentiments of the Church, who, in the public prayers, by her approved, teaches us to appeal constantly to his divine mother, and invoke her as the Health of the weak: "Salus infirmorum." The Refuge of sinners: "Refugium peccatorem." The Help of Christians: "Auxilium christianorum." Our life and our hope: "Vita et spes nostra." The same

holy Church, in the office which she requires to be recited on the Festivals of Mary, applying to her the words of Wisdom, gives us to understand that in Mary we shall find every hope: "In me is all hope of life and virtue."* That in Mary we shall find every grace: "In me is all grace of the way and of the truth."† In a word, that we shall find in Mary life and eternal salvation: "He that shall find me shall find life, and shall have salvation from the Lord."‡ And again: "They that work by me shall not sin. They that explain me shall have life everlasting."§ All which passages signify the need we have of the intercession of Mary.

This then is the sentiment in which so many theologians and holy fathers concur, of whom we cannot with justice say, as the author quoted above has asserted, that to exalt Mary they have uttered *hyperboles*, and that *excessive exaggerations* have fallen from their lips. To exaggerate and utter hyperboles, is to exceed the limits of truth, which cannot be said of the saints who have spoken, enlightened by the Spirit of God, who is the Spirit of truth. And here, if I may make a brief digression, let me express a sentiment of mine, namely: when an opinion is in any way honorable to the most holy Virgin, and has some foundation, and is not repugnant to the

* In me omnis spes vitæ et virtutis.

† In me omnis gratia vitæ et veritatis.

‡ Qui me invenerit, inveniet vitam, et hauriet salutem a Domino.

§ Qui operantur in me, non peccabunt. Qui elucidant me, vitam æternam habebunt.

faith and the decrees of the Church, and to the truth, the rejection of it, and opposition to it, because the contrary may also be true, indicates little devotion to the mother of God. I would not be one of the number of these, nor would I see you, my reader, one of them, but rather of the number of those who fully and firmly believe all that can be believed, without error, concerning the greatness of Mary, as the Abbot Rupert says, who places among the offerings of devotion most pleasing to this mother, that of a firm belief in her great privileges.* If no one else, St. Augustine at least might remove from us all fear of exaggeration in the praise of Mary, who asserts that all we may say in her praise is little in comparison with what she merits on account of her dignity as mother of God. The holy Church also, in the Mass of the blessed Virgin, requires these words to be read: "For thou art happy, oh sacred Virgin Mary, and most worthy of all praise."†

But let us return to our subject, and hear what the saints say of the opinion in question. St. Bernard says that God had bestowed all graces on Mary, that men, through her as through a channel, may receive whatever goods is in store for them.‡ Moreover, the saint here makes an important reflection, and says that be-

* Ejus magnalia firmiter credere. Laud. Virg.

† Felix namque es, sacra Virgo Maria, et omni laude dignissima.

‡ Plenus aquæductus, ut accipiant cæteri de plenitudine. Serm. de Aquæd.

fore the birth of the most holy Virgin there flowed no such current of grace for all, since this desired channel did not yet exist.* But for this end, he adds, Mary has been given to the world, that through this channel the divine graces might continually flow down upon us.†

As Holofernes, in order to gain the city of Bethulia, directed the aqueducts to be broken, so the devil makes every effort to deprive souls of their devotion to the mother of God; for, if this channel of grace were closed, he could easily succeed in gaining them to himself. The same holy father continues, and says: Observe, then, oh souls, with what affection and devotion the Lord would have us honor this our queen, by always seeking and confiding in her protection; for in her he has placed the fulness of all good, that henceforth we may recognize as coming from Mary whatever of hope, grace, or salvation we receive.‡ St. Antoninus says the same thing: All the mercies ever bestowed upon men have all come through Mary.§

For this reason she is called the moon, be-

* Propterea tempore humano generi fluenta gratiæ defuerunt, quod necdum intercederet is de quo loquimur, tam desiderabilis aquæductus. Serm. de Aquæd.

† Descendit per aquæductum vena illa cœlestis stillicidia gratiæ arentibus cordibus nostris infundens. Loc. cit.

‡ Intueamini quanto devotionis affectu a nobis eam voluit honorari, qui totius boni plenitudinem posuit in Maria; ut proinde si quid spei nobis est, si quid gratiæ, si quid salutis, ab ea noverimus redundare. Serm. de Nat. Virg.

§ Per eam de cœlis exivit quidquid gratiæ venit in mundum. P. 4, tit. 15, c. 20.

cause, as St. Bonaventure remarks, as the moon is between the sun and the earth, and reflects upon the latter what she receives from the former, so Mary receives the celestial influences of grace from the divine Son, to transfuse them into us who are upon the earth.*

For this reason, too, she is called the gate of heaven by the holy Church: "Felix cœli porta;" because, St. Bernard again observes, as every rescript of grace sent by the king comes through the palace gate, so it is given to Mary, that through her thou shouldst receive whatever thou hast.† St. Bonaventure, moreover, says that Mary is called the gate of heaven, because, no one can enter heaven if he does not pass through Mary, who is the door of it.‡

St. Jerome confirms us in the same sentiment (or, as some persons think, another ancient author of a sermon upon the Assumption which is inserted among the works of St. Jerome), when he says, that in Jesus Christ was the fulness of grace as in the head, whence descend to the members, which we are, all the vital spirits, that is, the divine aids for attaining eternal salvation: in Mary likewise was fulness as in the neck,

* Quia sicut luna inter corpora cœlestia et terrena est media, et quod ab illis accipit ad inferiora refundit; sic et Virgo regina inter nos et Deum est media, et gratiam ipsa nobis refundit. Serm. 74, de Nat. Dom.

† Datum est Mariæ, ut per illam acciperes quicquid haberes. Serm. 8, in Virg. Nat.

‡ Nullus potest cœlum intrare, nisi per Mariam transeat tamquam per portam.

through which those vital spirits pass to the members.* This is confirmed by St. Bernardine of Sienna, who more clearly unfolded this thought, saying that through Mary are transmitted to the faithful, who are the mystic body of Jesus Christ, all the graces of the spiritual life, which descends upon them from Jesus their head.†

St. Bonaventure also attempts to assign the reason for this when he says: God being pleased to dwell in the womb of this holy Virgin, she has acquired thereby, in a certain sense, a kind of jurisdiction over all graces; since Jesus came from her sacred womb, together with him proceed from her, as from a celestial ocean, all the streams of divine gifts.‡ St. Bernardine of Sienna expresses this in even clearer terms. From the time, he asserts, that this mother conceived in her womb the Divine Word, she acquired, if we may thus express it, a special right to the gifts which proceed to us from the Holy Spirit, so that no creature has received any grace from God except by the intervention and hand of Mary.§

* In Christo fuit plenitudo gratiæ sicut in capite influente, in Maria sicut in collo transfundente. Serm. de Ass. B. V.

† Per Virginem a capite Christi vitales gratiæ in ejus corpus mysticum transfunduntur. Serm. 61, de Nat. Virg. c. 8.

‡ Cum tota natura divina intra Virginis uterum extiterit; non timeo dicere quod in omnes gratiarum effluxus quamdam jurisdictionem habuerit hæc Virgo, de cujus utero quasi de quodam divinitatis oceano flumina emanabant omnium gratiarum. In Spec. cap. 3.

§ A tempore quo virgo mater concepit in utero verbum Dei, quamdam, ut sic dicam, jurisdictionem obtinuit, in omni spiritus sancti,

And thus is explained by a certain author* that passage of Jeremias where the prophet, speaking of the incarnation of the Word and of Mary his mother, says, that "a woman shall compass a man."† The author above named explains this to mean that, as no line proceeds from the centre of a circle which does not pass through its circumference; thus no grace comes to us from Jesus, who is the centre of every good, that does not pass through Mary, who encompassed him after she had received him in her womb.

Hence, says St. Bernardine, all gifts, all virtues, and all graces, are dispensed by Mary ‡ to whom she will, when she will, and in the manner she will. Richard likewise says, that God wishes all the good he bestows on creatures to pass through the hands of Mary.§ Hence the venerable Abbot of Celles exhorts every one to have recourse to this treasurer of graces, as he calls her: "Thesaurariam gratiarum;" for only by her means the world and men are to receive all the good they may hope for.‖ By which it is evident

processione temporali; ita ut nulla creatura aliquam a Deo obtinuit gratiam, nisi secundum ipsius piæ matris dispensationem. Serm. 61, tract. 1, art. 8.

* Crasset. Div. della Verg.

† Fœmina circumdabit virum. Jerem. xxxi. 22.

‡ Ideo omnia dona, virtutes, et gratiæ, quibus vult, quande vult, et quomodo vult, per ipsius manus dispensantur. Serm. 61, ut sup.

§ Deus quicquid boni dat creaturis suis, per manus matris Virginis vult transire.

‖ Accede ad Virginem, quia per ipsam mundus habiturus est omne bonum. De contempl. V. in Prol.

that the saints and authors above quoted, in saying that all graces come to us through Mary, have not intended to say this only because we have received from Mary, Jesus Christ, who is the fountain of every good, as the author named above would imply; but they assure us that God, after having given us Jesus Christ, has decreed that all the graces which have been dispensed, are dispensed, and shall be dispensed to men, even to the end of the world, through the merits of Jesus, shall be dispensed through the hands and by the intercession of Mary.

Hence Father Suarez concludes it to be the universal sentiment of the Church at the present day, that the intercession of Mary is not only useful, but necessary.* Necessary, as we said before, not in the sense of absolute necessity, because only the mediation of Jesus Christ is absolutely necessary for us, but in the sense of moral necessity; for the Church holds the opinion, with St. Bernard, that God has chosen to bestow no grace upon us but by the hands of Mary.† St. Ildephonsus affirmed this before St. Bernard, when, addressing the Virgin, he says: Oh Mary, God has decreed to commit to thee all the favors that he would confer upon men; hence he has confided to thee all the treasures and riches of grace.‡ And therefore St. Peter Damian

* Sentit Ecclesia intercessionem B. Virginis esse sibi utilem, et necessariam. Tom. 2, in 3, par. disp. 23, sect. 3.

† Nihil Deus habere nos voluit, quod per manus Mariæ non transiret. Serm. 3, in Vigil. Nat.

‡ Omnia bona quæ illis summa majestas decrevit facere, tuis manib

says,* that God would not become man without the consent of Mary, that, in the first place, we might remain greatly indebted to her; and secondly, that we might understand the salvation of all men to be made dependent upon her good pleasure.

St. Bonaventure, contemplating the words of Isaias, where the prophet says: From the race of Jesse there shall come forth a rod—that is, Mary; and from that the flower—that is, the Word incarnate,† utters these beautiful words: Let him who would obtain the grace of the Holy Spirit, seek the flower in the rod, Jesus in Mary; since by the rod we obtain the flower, and by the flower we find God.‡ And he afterwards adds: If thou wouldst have this flower, strive, with prayers, to incline the stem of the flower in thy favor, and thou wilt obtain it.§ The seraphic Doctor, also commenting on the words: "They found the child with Mary his mother,"‖ says: Jesus is never found but with and through Mary;¶

bus decrevit commendare; commissi quippe sunt thesauri, et ornamenta gratiarum. In Cor. Virg. c. 15.

* De Nat. Virg. ap. Pac. Exc. 1, n. 15.

† Egredietur virga de radice Jesse, et flos de radice ejus ascendet, et requiescet super eum spiritus Domini. Isa. xi. 1, 2.

‡ Quicumque Spiritus Sancti gratiam adipisci desiderat, florem, in virga quærat; per virgam enim ad florem, per florem ad spiritum perveninius. In Spec. c. 6.

§ Si hunc florem habere desideras, virgam floris precibus flectas. Loc. cit.

‖ Invenerunt puerum cum Maria matre ejus. Matth. ii. 11.

¶ Nunquam invenitur Christus, nisi cum Maria, nisi per Mariam. Serm. 35. In Epiph.

and concludes with these words: He seeks Jesus in vain who does not look for him with Mary.* Hence St. Ildephonsus says: I would be a servant of the Son, and as he can never be a servant of the Son who is not the servant of the mother, my ambition is to be a servant of Mary.†

EXAMPLE.

It is related by Belluacensis‡ and Cesarius,§ that a noble youth having lost by his vices the wealth left him by his father, became so poor that he was obliged to beg. He quitted his native land, that he might live with less shame in a distant country where he was unknown. On this journey he met one day an old servant of his father, who, seeing him so cast down by the poverty he was suffering, told him to cheer up, for he would take him to a prince who was so liberal that he would provide him with every thing he needed. Now this wretch was an impious sorcerer. One day he took the youth with him to a wood on the borders of a moor, where he began to address some invisible person. The youth asked to whom he was speaking. "To the devil," he answered; and seeing the youth terrified, bade him not to fear. Continuing to speak

* Frustra igitur quærit qui cum Maria invenire non quærit.

† Ut sim servus filii, servitutem appeto genitricis. De Virg. Mar. c. 12.

‡ Spec. Hist. l. 7, c. 105.

§ Dist. 2, c. 2.

with the devil, he said: "This youth, oh my master, is reduced to extreme necessity, and wishes to be restored to his former condition." "If he will obey me," said the enemy, "I will make him richer than before; but in the first place, he must renounce God." At this the youth shuddered, but urged on by that cursed magician, he yielded, and renounced God. "But this is not sufficient," said the demon; "he must also renounce Mary; for it is to her that we attribute our greatest losses. Oh, how many souls she has snatched from us, and led back to God and saved!" "Oh, this I will not do," exclaimed the youth; "deny Mary! why she is my only hope. I would rather be a beggar all my life." With these words he left the place. On his way he happened to pass a church dedicated to Mary. The unhappy youth entered it, and kneeling before her altar, began to weep and implore the most holy Virgin that she would obtain the pardon of his sins. Mary immediately began to intercede with the Son for that miserable being. Jesus at first said: "But that ungrateful youth, my mother, has denied me." But seeing that his mother still continued to entreat him, he at last said: "Oh, my mother, I have never refused thee any thing; he shall be pardoned, since thou dost ask it." The citizen who had purchased the inheritance of that prodigal was secretly present at this scene, and beholding the mercy of Mary towards that sinner, he gave him his only daughter in marriage, and made him heir of all his pos-

sessions. Thus that youth recovered, through the intercession of Mary, the favor of God and even his temporal possessions.

PRAYER.

Oh my soul! behold the beautiful hope of salvation, and of life eternal, which the Lord has granted thee, by giving thee, in his mercy, confidence in the protection of his mother, when thou hast by thy sins so often merited his displeasure and the pains of hell. Give thanks, then, to God, and to thy protectress, Mary, who hath deigned to shelter thee beneath her mantle, as already thou certainly knowest, by the many graces that thou hast received through her. Yes, I thank thee, oh my loving mother! for the good thou hast done me, a miserable sinner, deserving of hell. From how many dangers hast thou delivered me, oh my queen! How much light and how many mercies hast thou obtained for me, from God, by thy intercession! What great advantage, or what great honor hast thou received from me, that thou art thus intent on doing me good?

Thy goodness alone, then, hath moved thee in my behalf. Ah! if I were to give my blood, my life for thee, it would be little compared to what I owe thee, for thou hast delivered me from eternal death; thou, who hast enabled me to recover, as I hope, the divine favor, and from thee finally I acknowledge all my blessings to proceed.

Oh my Lady! most worthy of love, I a miserable creature can make thee no return but always to praise and love thee. Ah! do not disdain to accept the affection of a poor sinner, who is enamored of thy goodness. If my heart is not worthy to love thee, because it is evil and full of earthly affections, do thou change it. Ah! unite me to my God, and unite me so that I can never be separated from his love. This thou desirest of me, that I may love thy God, and this I wish from thee. Obtain for me that I may love him, and love him always, and I ask nothing more. Amen.

SECTION II.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

St. Bernard says, that as a man and a woman have co-operated for our ruin, so it was fit that another man and another woman should co-operate for our restoration; and these were Jesus and his mother Mary. Doubtless, says the saint, Jesus Christ alone was all-sufficient for our redemption: yet it was more fitting that each sex should take part in our redemption, when both took part in our corruption.* For this reason blessed Albertus Magnus calls Mary the co-operatrix with Christ in our redemption: "Adjutrix Redemptionis." And she herself revealed to St. Bridget, that as Adam and Eve

* Congruum magis fuit ut adesset nostræ reparationi sexus uterque, quorum corruptioni neuter defuissit. Serm. in Sig. Magn.

sold the world for one apple, so her Son and herself with one heart redeemed the world.* God could, indeed, as St. Anselm asserts, create the world from nothing; but when it was lost by sin, he would not redeem it without the co-operation of Mary.†

In three ways, says Father Suarez, the divine mother shared in the work of our salvation: first, by having merited, that is, with merit of congruity, the Incarnation of the Word. Secondly, by praying much for us while she lived on the earth. Thirdly, by willingly sacrificing to God the life of her Son for our salvation; and therefore the Lord has justly ordained that as Mary has, with so much love for man, aided in the salvation of all, and thereby so greatly promoted the glory of God, all through her intercession shall obtain salvation.

Mary is called the co-operatrix with her Son in our justification, because God has committed to her keeping all the graces that he has destined for us.‡ Wherefore St. Bernard affirms, that all men, past, present, and to come, should regard her as the medium and negotiator of the salvation of all ages.§

* Adam et Eva vendiderunt mundum pro uno pomo; filius meus et ego redemimus mundum uno corde. Lib. 5, c. 35.

† Qui potuit omnia de nihilo facere, noluit ea violata sine Maria reficere. In Alloq. cœl. n. 37.

‡ Auxiliatrix nostræ justificationis, quia Deus omnes gratias faciendas Mariæ commisit.

§ Ad illam sicut ad medium, sicut ad negotium omnium sæculorum respiciant, et qui præcesserunt, et nos qui sumus, et qui sequentur. Serm. 2, in Pentec.

Jesus Christ has said, that no one could find him unless his Eternal Father drew him by his divine grace.* Thus, also, according to Richard, Jesus said of his mother: No one comes to me unless my mother draw him with her prayers.†

Jesus was the fruit of Mary, as Elizabeth expressed it: "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb."‡ Whoever, then, wishes for the fruit, must go to the tree; whoever wishes for Jesus must go to Mary; and he who finds Mary, certainly also finds Jesus. St. Elizabeth, when the most holy Virgin came to visit her in her house, not knowing how to thank her, in deep humility exclaimed: "How have I merited that the mother of my God should come to visit me?"§ But why! we may ask: did not Elizabeth already know that not Mary only, but Jesus also, had entered her dwelling? And why, then, does she call herself unworthy to receive the mother, and not rather unworthy of receiving a visit from the Son. Ah, well did the saint understand that when Mary comes she brings Jesus also; and hence it was sufficient for her to thank the mother, without naming the Son.

"She is like the merchant's ship, she bringeth

* Nemo venit ad me, nisi Pater meus traxerit eum.

† Nemo venit ad me, nisi Mater mea suis precibus traxerit eum. In Cant. c. 2, v. 3.

‡ Benedicta tu inter mulieres, et benedictus fructus ventris tui. Luc. 1. 42.

§ Et unde hoc mihi, ut veniat mater Domini mei ad me? Lec. 2. 42.

her bread from afar."* Mary is that blessed ship, which brought to us from heaven Jesus Christ, the living bread that came from heaven to give us life eternal, as he has said: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever."† Hence Richard of St. Laurence says, that all those will be lost in the sea of this world who are not received into this ship, that is, protected by Mary.‡ He also adds, that whenever we find ourselves in danger of destruction from the temptations or passions of the present life, we ought to flee to Mary, crying quickly, Oh Lady, help us; save us, if thou wouldst not see us lost.§ And let it be remarked here, in passing, that this writer does not hesitate to say to Mary: Save us, we perish—"Salva nos, perimus;" as the author mentioned several times in the previous section does, who denies that we can ask the Virgin to save us, because, as he says it belongs only to God to save us. But if a person condemned to death may ask some favorite of the king to save him by interceding for him with his prince, why cannot we implore the mother of God to save us by obtaining for us through her prayers the grace of eter-

* Facta est quasi navis institoris, de longo portans panem suum. Prov. xxxi. 14.

† Ego sum panis vivus, qui de cœlo descendi, si quis manducaverit ex hoc pane vivet in æternum. Joan vi. 51.

‡ In mare mundi submergentur omnes illi, quos non suscepit navis ista. De Laud. Virg.

§ Ideo quoties videmus insurgentes fluctus hujus maris, clamare debemus ad Mariam; Domina, salva nos, perimus. Loc. cit.

nal life? St. John of Damascus did not hesitate to say to the Virgin: Oh pure and immaculate queen, save me, deliver me from eternal damnation.* St. Bonaventure called Mary the salvation of those invoking her.† The Church allows us to invoke her: Health of the weak—"Salus infirmorum;" and shall we hesitate to ask her to save us, when, according to a certain author, to no one is the door of salvation open except through her?‡ And before him St. Germanus, speaking of Mary, said: No one can be saved except through thee.§

But let us see what more the saints say of the need we have of the intercession of the divine mother. The glorious St. Cajetan said that we could ask for graces, but we could never obtain them without the intercession of Mary. And St. Antoninus confirms this, expressing himself thus beautifully: Whoever asks and wishes to obtain graces without the intercession of Mary, attempts to fly without wings;‖ for, as Pharaoh said to Joseph, "The land of Egypt is in thy hand;"¶ and as he sent all those to Joseph who applied to him for assistance, saying: Go to Joseph—"Ite ad Joseph;" so God, when we

* Regina immaculata et pura, salva me, libera ab eterna damnatione. Orat. Paneg.

† O salus te invocantium.

‡ Nemini nisi per eam patet aditus ad salutem. Pacciucch. de B. Virg.

§ Nemo qui salvus fiat nisi per te. Serm. de Zona. Virg.

‖ Qui petit sine ipsa, sine alis tentat volare. P. 3, tit. 15, c. 22, § 9.

¶ Terra Egypti in manu tua est.

supplicate him for favors, sends us to Mary: Go to Mary—"Ite ad Mariam;" for he has decreed, says St. Bernard, that he will grant no favors except through the hands of Mary.* Hence Richard of St. Laurence says: Our salvation is in the hands of Mary, and we Christians can more justly say to her than the Egyptians to Joseph, our salvation is in thy hand.† The venerable Idiot says the same thing: Our salvation is in her hands—"Salus nostra in manu illius est."‡ Cassian asserts the same thing, but in stronger language. He absolutely affirms that the salvation of the whole world depends upon the favor and protection of Mary.§ St. Bernardine of Sienna thus addresses her: Oh Lady, since thou art the dispenser of all graces, and we must receive the grace of salvation through thy hand alone, then our salvation depends on thee.‖

Richard says rightly then, that as a stone falls so soon as the earth is removed from beneath it, in like manner a soul, if the support of Mary is taken away, will fall first into sin and then into hell. ¶ St. Bonaventure adds, that God will not save us

* Decrevit nihil dare, nisi per Mariam. Serm. de Nat. Virg.

† Salus nostra in manu Mariæ est, ut ei dicere multo melius valeamus nos Christiani, quam Egyptii dixerunt Joseph salus nostra in manu illius est. L. 2, de Laud. Virg. p. 1.

‡ In Præf. Cant. 5.

§ Tota salus mundi consistit in multitudine favoris Mariæ.

‖ Tu dispensatrix omnium gratiarum; salus nostra in manu tua est. Serm. 1, de Nat. B. Virg.

¶ Sicut lapis, subtracta terra, delabitur in profundum; ita subtracto Mariæ adjutorio, homo delabitur in peccatum, et inde in infernum. L. 8, de Laud. Virg. c. 11.

without the intercession of Mary,* and goes on to say, that as an infant cannot live without its nurse, so no one without the protection of Mary can be saved.† Therefore he exhorts us in this way: Let thy soul thirst for devotion to Mary; preserve it always, never abandon it until you arrive in heaven and receive her maternal benediction.‡ Who, says St. Germanus, would ever know God, if it were not through thee, oh most holy Mary? Who would be saved? Who would be free from peril? Who would receive any favor if it were not through thee, oh mother of God? Oh Virgin mother, oh full of grace! § And in another place he says: If thou didst not open the way, no one would be free from the sting of the flesh and of sin.‖

As we have access to the eternal Father only through Jesus Christ, so, says St. Bernard, we have access to Jesus Christ only through Mary.¶ And St. Bernard gives us the reason why the Lord decreed that all men should be saved by the in-

* Ipse sine ea non salvabit te.

† Quemadmodum infans sine nutrice non potest vivere, ita sine domina nostra non potes habere salutem. In Cant. B. V. pro Sabb.

‡ Sitiat ergo anima tua ad ipsam; tene, nec dimitte, donec benedixerit tibi.

§ Nemo est, o sanctissima, qui ad Dei notitiam venit, nisi per te; nemo qui salvus fiat, nisi per te, Dei parens; nemo liber a periculis nisi per te, Virgo mater. Nemo donum Dei suscepit, nisi per te, gratia plena. Serm. de Zona. Virg.

‖ Nisi enim tu iter aperieres, nemo spiritualis evaderet. Orat. de Dorm. Deip.

¶ Per te accessum habemus ad filium, o inventrix gratiæ, mater salutis, ut per te nos suscipiat, qui per te datus est nobis.

tercession of Mary, namely that through Mary we might be received by that Saviour who, through Mary, has been given to us; and therefore the saint calls her the mother of grace and of our salvation. Then, resumes St. Germanus, what would become of us? what hope of salvation would remain to us if thou, oh Mary, didst abandon us, thou who art the life of Christians?*

But, the modern author above quoted remarks: If all graces pass through Mary, when we implore the intercession of the saints, they must have recourse to the meditation of Mary to obtain for us these graces. This, however, says he, no one believes, or has ever thought of. I reply, that there can be no error or difficulty in believing this. What difficulty is there in saying that God, to honor his mother, having crowned her queen of the saints, and having ordained that all graces should be dispensed by her hands would have the saints also invoke her to obtain favors for their clients? As to saying that no one has ever thought of it, I find that St. Bernard, St. Anselm, St. Bonaventure, Father Suarez† also, and others expressly assert it. In vain, says St. Bernard, would one pray to the other saints for a desired favor, if Mary did not intercede to obtain it for them. ‡ Thus also a certain author explains, in this connection, that

* Si nos deserueris, quid erit de nobis, Vita Christianorum? Serm. de Zona Virg.

† Tom. 2, in 3, p. D. 28, sect. 3.

‡ Frustra alios sanctos oraret, quem ista non adjuvaret.

passage of David: "All the rich among the people shall entreat thy countenance."* The rich of that great people of God are the saints, who, when they wish to obtain a favor for one of their clients, all recommend themselves to Mary, that she may obtain it for them. Justly, then, says Father Suarez, we implore the saints to be our intercessors with Mary, who is their lady and queen.†

It is precisely this which St. Benedict promised to St. Frances of Rome, as we learn from Father Marchese.‡ The above-named saint appeared to her one day, and taking her under his protection, promised to be her advocate with the divine mother. St. Anselm adds, in confirmation of this, addressing the blessed Virgin: Oh Lady, what the prayers of all these saints can obtain, in union with thine, thou canst obtain, by thy intercession alone without their aid.§ But wherefore hast thou such power? "quare hoc potes?" continues the saint. Because thou alone art the mother of our common Saviour, thou art the spouse of God, the universal queen of heaven and earth.‖ If thou dost not speak for us, no

* Vultum tuum deprecabuntur omnes divites plebis. Psal. xliv. 13.

† Inter sanctos non solemus uti uno tamquam intercessore ad alium, cum omnes sint ejusdem ordinis, ad virginem autem tamquam ad Dominam ac Reginam alii sancti adhibentur intercessores.

‡ Nel Diario di Maria alli. 21, di Marzo.

§ Quid possunt omnes isti tecum, tu sola potes sine illis omnibus. Orat. 45, ad S. Virg. Mar.

‖ Quia mater es salvatoris nostri, sponsa Dei, regina cœli et terræ. Lib. Or. Exc. v. ap. Pac. Exc. 20, in sal. Ang. 2, 7.

saint will pray for us and aid us.* But if thou art moved to pray for us, all the saints will engage to intercede for us and help us.† So says Father Segneri,‡ applying to Mary, as the holy Church does, these words of Wisdom: "I alone have compassed the circuit of heaven."§ As with its motion the first sphere puts in motion all the others, so when Mary is moved to pray for a soul, she moves all heaven to pray with her. St. Bonaventure says even, that when she commands, as being their queen, all the saints and angels to accompany her and unite their prayers to hers.‖

So we see, finally, why the holy Church requires us to invoke and salute the divine mother with the great name of our hope: Hail our hope, "Spes nostra salve." The impious Luther could not endure that the holy Roman Church should call Mary, our hope;¶ because, as he said, God only and Jesus Christ as our mediator are our hope; but that God curses those who place their hope in any creature, as we find in Jeremias: "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man."**

* Te tacente, nullus juvabit, nullus orabit.

† Te, domina orante, omnes juvabunt et orabunt.

‡ In his book, "Divoto di Maria."

§ Gyrum cœli circuivi sola. Eccli. xxiv. 8.

‖ Quando virgo sanctissima procedit ad Deum pro nobis deprecandum imperat angelis et sanctis, ut eam comitentur, et simul cum ipsa altissimum pro nobis exorent. In Spec. V. c. 3.

¶ Ferre nequeo ut Maria dicatur spes et vita mea. In Post. Maj. Evang. in Nat. Mar.

** Maledictus homo qui confidit in homine. xvii. 5.

But the Church teaches us everywhere to invoke Mary, and call her our hope: "Spes nostra salve." Whoever places his hope in a creature, independently of God, is certainly accursed of God, since God is the only fountain and the dispenser of every good, and the creature, without God, has nothing and can do nothing. But if the Lord has ordained, as we have proved, that all graces shall pass through Mary, as a channel of mercy, we can, and ought even to assert that Mary is our hope, by whose intercession we receive divine graces, and therefore it is St. Bernard called her the whole cause of his hope.* St. John of Damascus expresses the same thing when, addressing the blessed Virgin, he says to her: Oh Lady, in thee I have placed all my hope, and with firm confidence I look to thee for my salvation.† St. Thomas says that Mary is all the hope of our salvation.‡ St. Ephrem explains: Oh most holy Virgin, receive us under thy protection, if thou wilt see us saved, since we have no other hope of being saved but through thee.§

We will then conclude in the words of St. Bernard: Let us strive, with all the affections of our heart, to reverence this divine mother, Mary, since this is the will of that Lord who would

* Filioli, hæc maxima mea fiducia, hæc tota ratio spei meæ. Or. Pan. ad B. V.

† In te spem meam collocavi ex animo et intentis oculis, abs te pendeo. Ap. Auriem. to. 1, c. 7.

‡ Omnes spes vitæ. Opusc. 7.

§ Nobis non est alia quam a te fiducia, o virgo sincerrissima. Sub alis pietatis protege et custodi nos. De Laud. Virg.

have us receive all good from her hands.* And the saint exhorts us, whenever we desire and ask any favor, to recommend ourselves to Mary, and trust that we shall obtain it through her intercession.† For, says the saint, if you do not deserve from God the favor you ask, Mary, who asks it in your behalf, merits to obtain it.‡ Hence the same Bernard exhorts us each and all, that, whatever we offer to God, whether works or prayers, we recommend all to Mary, if we wish our Lord to accept them.§

EXAMPLE.

Eutychian, Patriarch of Constantinople, relates the following well-known story of Theophilus. The Patriarch was an eye-witness of the fact which we here relate, and which is confirmed by St. Peter Damian, St. Bernard, St. Bonaventure, St. Antoninus, and others.‖ Theophilus was archdeacon of the Church of Adanas, a city of Cilicia; and was so much esteemed, that the people wished him to become their bishop, but his humility prevented his consent.

* Totis medullis cordium hanc Mariam veneremur, quia sic est voluntas ejus, qui totum nos habere voluit per Mariam. Serm. de Nat. B. V.

† Quæramus gratiam, et per Mariam quæramus. Serm. de Aquæd.

‡ Quia indignus eras, cui donaret, datum est Mariæ ut per illam acciperes quidquid haberes. Serm. 3, in Virg. Nativ.

§ Quidquid Deo offerre potes, Mariæ commendare memento, si non vis sustinere repulsum. Serm. de Aquæd.

‖ Crasset Div. alla. B. V. tom. 1, tr. 1, q. 10.

Some malicious persons afterwards accused him, and he was deposed from his office. This afflicted him so much, that, blinded by passion, he went to a Jewish magician, who induced him to apply to Satan for help in his misfortunes. The devil answered that if he wished his assistance, he must renounce Jesus, and Mary his mother, and hand over to him the act of renunciation, written with his own hand. Theophilus executed the vile document. On the following day the bishop having heard of the wrong done him by his calumniators, asked his forgiveness, and restored him to his office. But Theophilus began then to feel so tortured by remorse of conscience on account of the great crime he had committed, that he wept continually. What does he do? He enters a church, prostrates himself in tears before an altar of the blessed Virgin, and exclaims: "Oh mother of God, I will not despair having thee, who art so merciful, to aid me." He persevered forty days in weeping and praying thus to the holy Virgin; when behold, one night the mother of mercy appeared to him and said: "Oh Theophilus, what have you done? you have renounced my friendship and that of my Son; and for whom? for your own and my enemy." "Oh Lady," answered Theophilus, "it belongs to thee to pardon me, and to obtain my pardon from thy Son." Then Mary, seeing his confidence, answered, "Take courage, and I will pray for thee." Theophilus, encouraged by these words, redoubled his tears, his penance,

and his prayers, remaining constantly at the foot of the altar. And, behold, Mary appeared to him again, and with a joyful countenance said to him: "Theophilus, rejoice, I have presented thy tears and thy prayers to God; he hath accepted them, and hath already pardoned thee; henceforth be grateful and faithful." "Oh Lady," replied Theophilus, "this is not sufficient to console me; the enemy still holds that impious deed, by which I have renounced thee and thy Son; thou canst obtain it for me." After three days Theophilus awoke one night, and found the paper on his breast. The next day, when the bishop with a large assembly were present in the church, Theophilus cast himself at his feet, related the whole story, weeping bitterly, and gave him the infamous writing, which the bishop immediately ordered to be burned in presence of all the people, who wept for joy, praising the goodness of God, and the mercy of Mary towards that miserable sinner. Theophilus returned to the church of the Virgin, and there, three days afterwards, he died happily, with thanksgivings to Jesus and his holy mother on his lips.

PRAYER.

Oh Queen and Mother of mercy! who dost dispense graces to all those who have recourse to thee, so liberally because thou art queen, and with so much love because thou art our most

loving mother; to thee I commend myself today, destitute of merits and virtues as I am, and laden with debts to the divine justice. Oh, Mary, thou hast the keys of all the divine mercies, do not forget my miseries, and do not leave me in my great poverty. Thou who art so liberal with all, and who givest more than is asked of thee, do so with me, Oh Lady, protect me, this is all I ask. If thou dost protect me I fear nothing. I do not fear the demons, for thou art more powerful than all the spirits of hell; nor my sins, for one word of thine in my behalf can obtain pardon of them all from God. If I have thy favor I do not fear even the anger of God, for he is appeased by one prayer of thine. In a word, if thou dost protect me I hope all things, because all things are possible with thee. Oh mother of mercy, I know that thou takest pleasure and pride in giving succor to the most miserable, for thou canst aid them, if not prevented by their obstinacy. I am a sinner, but I am not obstinate; I wish to change my life. Thou canst, then, help me; do help and save me. Today I place myself entirely in thy hands. Teach me what I must do to please God, and I will do it; and I hope to do so with thy aid, oh Mary, Mary, my mother, my light, my consolation, my refuge, and my hope. Amen, amen, amen.

CHAPTER VI.

EJA ERGO ADVOCATA NOSTRA.

Ah, then, our advocate.

SECTION I.

MARY IS AN ADVOCATE POWERFUL TO SAVE ALL.

So great is the authority of mothers over their children that although they may be monarchs, having absolute dominion over all the persons in their kingdom, yet their mothers can never become subject to them. It is true that Jesus is now in heaven, for he is seated there at the right hand of the Father even as man, as St. Thomas explains it; by reason of the hypostatic union with the person of the Word, and has supreme dominion over all, and even over Mary; yet it will always be true, that at the time when our Redeemer lived on this earth, he was pleased to humble himself and make himself subject to Mary, as St. Luke teaches us: And he was subject to them: "Erat subditus illis."* St. Ambrose even says, that Jesus Christ having deigned to make Mary his mother, was obliged as her son to obey her. And therefore, observes Rich-

* C. ii. v. 51.

ard of St. Laurence, it is said of the other saints, that they are with God; but of Mary alone can it be said, that not only was it her lot to be subject to the will of God, but that God was also subject to her will.* And as it is said of the other holy virgins, as the same author remarks, that they follow the divine lamb wherever he goes: "sequuntur agnum quocumque ierit;"† of the Virgin Mary it may be said, that the divine Lamb followed her on this earth, having become subject to her.‡

Hence we may say, that though Mary is in heaven, and can no longer command her Son, yet her prayers will ever be the prayers of a mother, and therefore most powerful to obtain whatever she asks. Mary, says St. Bonaventure, has this privilege with her Son, that she is most powerful to obtain by her prayers whatsoever she will.§ And wherefore? Precisely for the reason which we have before mentioned, and which we will now examine more fully, namely, because the prayers of Mary are the prayers of a mother. And therefore, says St. Peter Damian, the Virgin has all power in heaven as on earth, being able to raise to the

* Cum de ceteris sanctis dicatur, eos esse cum Deo, Maria majus aliquid sortita est, ut non solum ipsa subjiceretur voluntati Dei, sed etiam Dominus voluntati ipsius. L. 1, de Laud. Virg. c. 5.

† Ap. 14.

‡ De virgine autem Maria secure dici potest, quod agnus sequebatur eam, quocumque ivit; ex illo Lucæ: Erat subditus illis. Loc. cit.

§ Grande privilegium Mariæ, quod apud filium sit potentissima. In Spec. c. 8.

hope of salvation even the most despairing.* And then he adds, that when the mother asks any favor for us of Jesus Christ (called by the saint the altar of mercy where sinners obtain pardon from God), the Son has so great regard for the prayers of Mary, and so great a desire to please her, that when she prays, she seems to command rather that request, and to be a mistress rather than a handmaid.† Thus Jesus would honor this his dear mother, who has honored him so much in her life, by granting her immediately whatever she asks and desires. St. Germanus beautifully confirms this by saying to the Virgin: Thou art mother of God, omnipotent to save sinners, and needest no other recommendation with God, since thou art the mother of true life.‡

St. Bernardine of Sienna does not hesitate to say that all obey the commands of Mary, even God himself;§ signifying by these words, that God listens to her prayers as though they were commands. Hence St. Anselm thus addresses Mary: The Lord, oh holy Virgin, has so highly exalted thee, that by his favor thou canst obtain

* Data est tibi omnis potestas in cœlo et in terra; et nihil tibi impossibile, cui possibile est etiam desperatos in spem salutis relevare. Serm. 1, de Nat. B. V.

† Accedis enim ad illud humanæ reconciliationis altare, non solum rogans, sed imperans; domina, non ancilla; nam filius nihil negans honorat. Loc. cit.

‡ Serm. 3, in Dorm. B. V.

§ Imperio Virginis omnia famulantur, etiam Deus. Tom. 2, Serm. 61.

all possible graces for thy servants, for thy protection is omnipotent.* Thy help is omnipotent, oh Mary: Omnipotens auxilium tuum, O Maria;" as Cosmas of Jerusalem exclaims. Yes, Mary is omnipotent, adds Richard of St. Laurence, since the queen, by every law, must enjoy the same privileges as the king. For as the power of the Son and mother are the same, the mother by the omnipotent Son is made omnipotent.† As St. Antoninus says: God has placed the whole Church, not only under the patronage, but also under the dominion of Mary.‡

As the mother, then, must have the same power as the Son, justly was Mary made omnipotent by Jesus, who is omnipotent; it being, however, always true, that whereas the Son is omnipotent by nature, the mother is so by grace. And her omnipotence consists in this, that the Son denies nothing that the mother asks; as it was revealed to St. Bridget, who heard Jesus one day addressing Mary in these words: "Oh my mother, thou knowest how I love thee; ask from me, then, whatever thou dost desire, for there is no demand of thine that will not be graciously heard by me."§ And the reason that he added was beauti-

* Te Deus, o virgo, sic exaltavit, ut omnia tibi secum possibilia esse donaris. Lib. de Conc. Virg.

† Eisdem privilegiis secundum leges gaudet rex et regina. Cum autem eadem sit potestas filii et matris, ab omnipotente filio omnipotens mater facta est. L. 4, de Laud. Virg.

‡ Ecclesia est, non tantum sub Virginis patrocinio, verum etiam sub dominatione ac potestate. P. 4, tit. 15, c. 20, 62.

§ Pete quod vis a me, non enim potest esse inanis petitio tua. Rev. l. c. 4.

ful: "Mother, when thou wast on earth, there was nothing thou didst refuse to do for love of me; now that I am in heaven, it is just that I refuse nothing which thou dost ask of me.* Mary is, then, called omnipotent in the sense in which it can be understood of a creature, who is not capable of any divine attribute. She is omnipotent, because she obtains by her prayers whatever she wishes.

With reason, then, oh our great advocate! says St. Bernard, dost thou only wish, and it is done: "Velis tu et omnia fient." And St. Anselm: Whatever thou askest, oh Virgin! cannot but be done.† Wish, and it will be done; dost thou wish to raise the most abandoned sinner to an exalted sanctity, to thee it is given to do it. The blessed Albertus Magnus represents Mary speaking thus: I must be asked to wish, for if I wish it must be done.‡ Hence St. Peter Damian, contemplating this great power of Mary, and praying her to have pity on us, says: Oh Mary! oh our beloved advocate! since thou hast a heart so compassionate, that thou canst not behold the miserable without pity, and, at the same time, hast so great a power with God to save all those whom thou dost defend; deign to intercede in behalf of us miserable creatures, who place in

* Quia tu mihi nihil negasti in terris, ego nihil tibi negabo in cœlis.

† Quicquid tu Virgo velis, nequaquam fieri non poterit. De Exc. Virg. c. 12.

‡ Roganda sum, ut velim; quia, si volo, necesse est fieri. Ap. P. Pep. Grand, etc.

thee all our hopes. If our prayers do not move thee, may thy merciful heart at least move thee; may thy power at least move thee, since God, for this end, has enriched thee with so much power, that the richer thou art in the power to aid us, so much more compassionate thou mayest be in thy desire to aid us.* Of this, St. Bernard assures us, saying, that Mary is abundant in mercy as well as in power; as her charity is most powerful, so also is it most merciful in our behalf, and this is manifested to us continually by its effects.†

Even when she was living on this earth, the only thought of Mary, after the glory of God, was to relieve the wretched. And we know that then she enjoyed already the privilege of obtaining whatever she asked. This we know from what took place at the nuptials of Cana of Galilee, when the wine failed, and the blessed Virgin, compassionating the distress and mortification of that family, asked the Son to relieve them by a miracle, making known to him this want: They have no wine: "Vinum non habent."‡ Jesus answered: "Woman, what is that to thee and to me? my hour is not yet come."§ Observe, that although the Lord appeared to refuse

* Moveat te natura; potentia moveat; quia quanto potentior tanto misericordior esse debebis. Serm. 1, de N. B. V.

† Potentissima, et piissima charitas matris Dei, et affectu compatiendi, et subveniendi abundat effectu; æque locuples in utroque. Serm. 4. de Assumt.

‡ Joan. ii. 3.

§ Quid mihi et tibi, mulier? nondum venit hora mea. Joan. ii. 4.

this favor to his mother, by saying: Of what importance is it, oh woman, to me and to thee that the wine has failed? It does not become me now to perform any miracle, as the time has not arrived, the time of my preaching, when with signs I must confirm my doctrine; yet notwithstanding this, Mary, as if the Son had already granted her the favor, said to the attendants, Fill the water-pots with water: "Imple hydrias aqua."* Come fill the water-pots, and you will be consoled; and Jesus Christ, indeed to please his mother, changed that water into the best wine. But how is this? If the time appointed for miracles was the time of preaching, how could it be anticipated by the miracle of the wine, contrary to the divine decree? Nothing, it may be answered, was done contrary to the divine decree; for although, generally speaking, the time for signs had not come, yet from eternity God had established by another general decree, that nothing the divine mother could ask should be denied her; and therefore Mary, well acquainted with her privilege, although her Son seemed to have then set aside her petition, said notwithstanding, that the water-pots should be filled, as though the favor was already granted. This, St. John Chrysostom would express, when commenting on the passage of John above mentioned—"Oh woman, what is that to thee and to me?"—he says, that although Jesus had answer-

* Joan. ii. 7.

ed thus, yet, for the honor of his mother, he did not fail to comply with her demand.* St. Thomas confirms the same, when he observes, that by these words—"My hour has not yet come"—Jesus Christ wished to show that he would have deferred the miracle, if another had asked him to perform it; but because his mother asked it, he immediately performed it.† St. Cyril and St. Jerome confirm this, according to Barrada. And Jansenius of Ghent says, commenting on the same passage of St. John: That he might honor his mother, he anticipated the time of working miracles.‡

In a word, it is certain that no creature can obtain for us miserable sinners so many mercies as this good advocate, who is honored by God with this privilege, not only as his beloved handmaid, but also as his true mother. William of Paris says this when addressing her.§ It is enough that Mary speaks, and the Son does all she wishes. The Lord, speaking to the spouse of the Canticles, by whom is understood Mary, says: "Thou that dwellest in the gardens the

* Et licet ita responderit, maternis tamen precibus obtemperavit.

† Per illa verba, nondum venit hora mea, ostendit se dilatucum fuisse miraculum, si alius rogasset; quia tamen rogabat mater, fecit. Apud. Defens. cultus Mariani, auctore R. D. Henr. de Cerf. p. 129.

‡ Quo matrem honoraret, prævenit tempus miraculi faciendi.

§ Nulla creatura tot et tanta impetrare posset apud filium tuum miseris, quam tu impetras eisdem; in quo procul dubio non tamquam ancillam, sed tamquam matrem verissimam te honorat.

friends hearken, make me hear thy voice."* The friends are the saints, who, when they ask any favor for their clients, wait until their queen prays to God for it and obtains it; for, as was said before in Chap. V., no favor is dispensed except by the intercession of Mary. And how does Mary obtain favors? It is enough that her Son hears her voice: Make me to hear thy voice: "Fac me audire vocem tuam," it is enough that she speaks, and her Son immediately hears her. William of Paris, explaining in the same way the passage above named, introduces the Son, who thus addresses Mary: Oh thou who dwellest in the celestial gardens, intercede with confidence for whomsoever thou wilt, for I cannot forget that I am thy Son, or think of refusing any thing to my mother. It is enough for thee to speak, and thy Son will graciously hear and grant thy petition.† The Abbot Godfrey says that Mary, although she obtains favors by praying, yet prays with a kind of maternal authority; hence we may be sure that she will obtain whatever she desires and asks for us.‡

It is related of Coriolanus, by Valerius Maxi-

* Quæ habitas in hortis, amici auscultant, fac me audire vocem tuam. Cant. viii. 13.

‡ Quæ habitas in hortis cœlestibus, fiducialiter pro quibus volueris intercede; non enim possum oblivisci me filium tuum, ut matri quidpiam denegandum putem. Tantum ut vocem proferat, quia a filio audiri, exaudiri est.

‡ Virgo Maria ex eo quod ille homo est, et natus ex ea, quasi quodam matus imperio, apud ipsum impetrare quod voluerit pia fiducia non dubitatur. Serm. viii. de B. Virg.

mus,* that when he held Rome besieged, all the prayers of his friends and of the citizens could not induce him to withdraw his forces; but when his mother Veturia came to entreat him he could not resist, and immediately raised the siege. But the prayers of Mary are as much more powerful with Jesus than the prayers of Veturia with her son, as the love and gratitude of Jesus to Mary exceeds that of the son of Veturia for his mother. Father Justin Micoviensis writes: One sigh of Mary has more power than the prayers of all the saints united.† The devil himself confessed this same thing to St. Dominic, when, constrained by his commands, he spoke through the mouth of a possessed person, saying, as Father Pacciucchelli narrates,‡ that one sigh of Mary availed more with God than the united prayers of all the saints.

St. Antoninus says, that the prayers of the blessed Virgin being the prayers of a mother, have a certain kind of authority, hence it is impossible that she should not be heard when she prays.§ On this account St. Germanus encourages sinners to recommend themselves to this advocate with these words: Thou, oh Mary, having the authority of a mother with God, dost

* Lib. 5, cap. 4.

† Unum beatæ Mariæ suspirium plus posset, quam omnium Sanctorum simul suffragia. In lit. B. V. verbo. Virg. pot.

‡ De B. V.

§ Oratio Deiparæ habet rationem imperii; unde impossibile est, eam non exaudiri. P. 4, tit. 15, c. 17, § 4.

obtain pardon for the vilest sinners; for the Lord, who in all things recognizes thee for his true mother, cannot refuse to grant thee whatever thou dost ask.* St. Bridget, too, heard the saints in heaven saying to the Virgin: What is there that thou canst not do? Whatever thou dost desire is done.† To which corresponds that celebrated verse: What God by a command, thou, oh Virgin, by a prayer canst effect.‡ Is it not, says St. Augustine, worthy of the goodness of the Lord thus to guard the honor of his mother? for he asserts that he has come on the earth, not to break, but to fulfil the law, which, among other things, commands us to honor our parents.§

St. George, Archbishop of Nicomedia, even adds, that Jesus Christ grants to his mother all her petitions, as if to satisfy the obligation that he is under to her for having caused, by her consent, that the human nature should be given him.‖ Wherefore, St. Methodius, the martyr exclaims: Rejoice, oh Mary, that a Son has fallen to thy lot as thy debtor, who gives to all and

* Tu autem materna in Deum auctoritate pollens, etiam iis qui enormiter peccant, eximiam remissionis gratiam concilias; non enim potes non exaudiri, cum Deus tibi ut veræ et intemeratæ Matri in omnibus morem gerat. Van. Enc. Deip.

† Domina benedicta, quid est quod non poteris? Quod enim vis, hoc factum est. L. 4, Rev. c. 74.

‡ Quod Deus imperio, tu prece Virgo potes.

§ Nunquid non pertinet ad benignitatem Domini, matris honorem servare, qui legem non venit solvere; sed adimplere?

‖ Filius quasi exsolvens debitum, implet petitiones tuas. Or. de Ex. Mar.

receives from none. We are all debtors to God for whatever we possess, since every thing is his gift; but God has wished to make himself a debtor to thee, taking from thee his body and becoming man.* So also St. Augustine says: Mary having merited to give flesh to the Divine Word, and by that to furnish the price of the divine redemption, that we might be delivered from eternal death; therefore is she, says the same doctor, more powerful than any other to help us and obtain for us eternal salvation.† Hence St. Theophilus, Bishop of Alexandria, who lived in the time of St. Jerome, thus wrote: The Son is pleased to be entreated by his mother, because he wishes to grant for her sake all that he does grant; and thus to recompense the favor he has received from her when she gave him flesh. Hence St. John Damascene addresses the Virgin in these words: Thou, then, oh Mary, being mother of God, canst save all men by thy prayers, which are enforced by a mother's authority.‡

Let us conclude with the words of St. Bonaventure, who, considering the great benefit which the Lord has conferred on us in giving us Mary for our advocate, thus addresses her: Oh truly

* Euge euge, quæ debitorem habes filium, qui omnibus mutuatur. Deo enim universi debemus, tibi autem etiam ille debitor est. Orat. in Hyp. Dom.

† Virgo quæ meruit pro liberandis proferre pretium, potest plus omnibus suffragium liberatis impendere. Orat. 2. de aff. B. V.

‡ Potes quidem omnes salvare, ut Dei Altissimi Mater, precibus materna auctoritate pollentibus. Ex. Men. 1, Jan. Ode. 4.

immense and admirable goodness of God, who to us miserable, guilty creatures, has granted thee, oh our Lady, for our advocate, that thou mightest, by thy powerful intercession, obtain for us whatever good thou wilt.* Oh, the great mercy of God, continues the saint, who, that we might not flee to hide ourselves from the sentence to be pronounced upon us, has destined his own mother and the treasurer of graces for our advocate.†

EXAMPLE.

Father Razzi, of the order of Camaldoli, relates that a certain youth having lost his father, was sent by his mother to the court of a prince.‡ The mother, who had a great devotion to Mary, when she parted with him made him promise to recite every day a "Hail Mary," and add these words: "*Blessed Virgin, help me in the hour of my death.*" The youth arrived at court, but soon began to lead so dissolute a life, that his master was obliged to send him away. In despair, without means of support, he went into the country and became a highway robber; but even then he did not omit to recommend himself to our Lady, as his mother had directed him. At

* Oh certe Dei nostri mira benignitas, qui suis reis te Dominam tribuit advocatam, ut auxilio tuo, quod volueris, valeas impetrare. In Salv. Reg.

† O mirabilis erga nos, misericordia Dei nostri, qui ne fugeremus pro sententia, voluit matrem ac dominam gratiæ instituero advocatam!

‡ Mirac. di Maria, Mir. 47.

length he fell into the hands of justice, and was condemned to death. Being in prison the evening before his execution, and thinking of his disgrace, the grief of his mother, and the death which awaited him, he fell to weeping bitterly. The devil seeing him so oppressed by melancholy, appeared to him in the form of a beautiful young man, and said to him that he would release him from death and prison, if he would follow his directions. The convict engaged to do all that he required. Then the pretended youth made known to him that he was the devil and had come to his assistance. In the first place, he ordered him to renounce Jesus Christ and the holy sacraments. The youth consented. He then required him to renounce the Virgin Mary and her protection. "This," exclaimed the young man, "I will never do," and turning to Mary, repeated the accustomed prayer that his mother had taught him: *Blessed Virgin, help me in the hour of my death.* At these words the devil disappeared. The youth remained in great affliction for the wickedness he had committed in denying Jesus Christ. He invoked the blessed Virgin, and she obtained for him, by her prayers, a great sorrow for all his sins, so that he made his confession with much weeping and contrition. On his way to the gallows, happening to pass before a statue of Mary, he saluted her with his usual prayer: *Blessed Virgin, help me in the hour of my death,* and the statue, in the presence of all, inclined its head and saluted him. Deeply mov-

ed, he begged to be allowed to kiss the feet of the image. The executioners refused, but afterwards consented on account of the clamor of the people. The youth stooped to kiss her feet, and Mary extended her arm from that statue, took him by the hand and held him so strongly that no power could move him. At this prodigy the multitude shouted "Pardon, pardon," and pardon was granted. Having returned to his country, he led an exemplary life, and was always most devoted to Mary, who had delivered him from temporal and eternal death.

PRAYER.

Oh great mother of God, I will say to thee with St. Bernard: Thy Son hears thee and will grant thee whatsoever thou dost ask.* Speak then, speak, oh Mary our advocate, in behalf of us miserable creatures. Remember that thou hast received thy great power and dignity even for our benefit. A God has chosen to become thy debtor, by taking from thee the human nature to the end that thou mayest dispense to the miserable the riches of divine mercy. We are thy servants, in a special manner consecrated to thy service, and among these I hope to be one. We glory in living under thy protection. If thou doest good to all, even to those who do not know thee and do not honor thee, and who even insult

* Loquere, Domina, quia audit filius tuus et quæcumque petieris, impetrabis.

and blaspheme thee; how much ought we to hope from thy kindness, who dost seek for the wretched that thou mayest relieve them! we who honor, love, and trust in thee! We are great sinners, but God has granted thee mercy and power greater than all our sins. Thou canst and wilt save us; and we will so much the more earnestly desire this, as we are unworthy of it, that we may glorify thee the more in heaven, when we shall have been received there by thy intercession. Oh, mother of mercy, we present to thee our souls once pure and washed with the blood of Jesus Christ, but since defiled with sin. To thee we present them, wilt thou purify them? Obtain for us sincere amendment, obtain for us the love of God, perseverance, paradise. We ask great things of thee, but canst thou not obtain them all for us? Are they greater than the love God has for thee? Thou hast only to open thy lips in prayer to thy Son, and he will grant thee all things. Pray, then, pray, oh Mary, for us; and surely thou wilt be heard graciously, and we shall be saved.

SECTION II.

MARY IS A MERCIFUL ADVOCATE, WHO DOES NOT REFUSE TO DEFEND THE CAUSE OF THE MOST MISERABLE SINNERS.

THERE are so many reasons why we should love this our loving queen, that if all the earth should praise Mary, and all sermons treat of her alone, and all men should give their lives

for Mary, it would yet be little compared to the homage and gratitude we owe her, for the very tender love she bears to all men, even to the most miserable sinners who preserve towards her any feeling of devotion. Raymond Jordan declares that Mary cannot but love those who love her. Nay she does not disdain even to serve those who serve her, using, if they are sinners, all the power of her intercession to obtain pardon for them from her blessed Son.* And so great, he goes on to say, is her kindness and compassion, that no one, however degraded he may be, should fear to cast himself at her feet, since she rejects no one who has recourse to her.† Mary, as our most loving advocate, offers herself to God the prayers of her servants, especially those which are offered to her; for as the Son intercedes for us with the Father, thus she intercedes for us with the Son, and never ceases to intercede with both for our salvation, and to obtain for us the favors that we ask.‡ Rightly, then, does the blessed Denis, the Carthusian, call the holy Virgin the peculiar refuge of the lost, the hope of the wretched and the advocate of all sinners who have recourse to her.§

* Maria diligit diligentes se; imo sibi servientibus servit. Ipsa benedicto filio suo irato potentissime reconciliat servos et amatores suos. Præf. in Cant.

† Tanta est ejus benignitas, quod nulli formidandum est ad eam accedere; tantaque misericordia ut nemo ab ea repellatur.

‡ Ipsa preces servorum, maxime quæ sibi exhibentur, repræsentat in conspectu divinæ majestatis; quia ipsa est advocata nostra apud filium, sicut filius apud Patrem. Imo apud Patrem et Filium procurat negotia et preces nostras. In dict. Præf.

§ Singulare perditorum refugium, miserorum spem, advocatam omnium iniquorum ad se confugientium.

But if there ever be any sinner who, indeed, does not doubt the power, but has no trust in the mercy of Mary, fearing that she may not be willing to aid him on account of the magnitude of his offences, St. Bonaventure encourages him by saying: Great and peculiar is the privilege which Mary has with her Son, of obtaining by her prayers whatever she desires;* but what would this great power of Mary avail us, he adds, if she should be indifferent to our welfare?† No, let us not doubt, concludes the saint, let us be secure, and always thank the Lord and his divine mother for it; for, as she is the most powerful of all saints with God, so she is the most loving advocate, and the most desirous of our welfare.‡ And who, oh mother of sinners! joyfully exclaims St. Germanus, who, after thy Jesus, has so much care of us, and of our welfare, as thou?§ Who doth defend us in the trials that afflict us, as thou dost defend us? Who take upon himself to protect sinners, as if combating in their behalf, as thou dost?‖ Wherefore, he adds, thy patronage, oh Mary! is more powerful and loving than we are able to comprehend.¶ Whilst, as the Idiot says, all

* Grande privilegium Mariæ, quod apud filium sit potentissima. In Spec. lect. 6, 7.

† Sed quid tanta Mariæ potentia prodesset nobis; si ipsa nihil curaret de nobis?

‡ Carissimi sciamus indubitanter, et pro hoc gratias agamus incessanter, quia sicut ipsa apud eum omnibus sanctis est potentior, ita pro nobis omnibus est sollicitior.

§ Quis post filium tuum curam gerit generis humani, sicut tu? Serm. de Zona. Virg.

‖ Quis ita nos defendit in nostris afflictionibus. Quis pugnat pro peccatoribus?

¶ Propterea patrocinium tuum majus est quam apprehendi possit.

the other saints can aid their own servants by their patronage more than others; the divine mother, as she is the queen of all, so is she the advocate of all, and cares for the salvation of all.*

She cares for all, even for sinners, and glories especially in being called their advocate; as she herself declared to the venerable sister Mary Villani, saying: "Next to the title of mother of God, I glory most in being named the advocate of sinners." The blessed Amadeus says, that our queen is always before the divine Majesty, interceding for us with her powerful prayers.† And since in heaven she knows perfectly our miseries and necessities, she cannot but have pity on us; so, with the affection of a mother, moved by compassion for us, she kindly and mercifully endeavors to relieve and save us.‡ It is with good reason, then, that Richard of St. Laurence encourages every one, however degraded he may be, to appeal confidently to this sweet advocate, in the certain belief that he will always find her ready to help him.§ It is also well said by Godfrey,

* Cæteri sancti jure quodam patrocinii pro sibi specialiter commissis plus possunt prodesse, quam pro alienis; beatissima vero Virgo, sicut omnium est regina, sic est omnium patrona et advocata, et cura illi est de omnibus. De Contempl. B. V. in Prol.

† Adstat beatissima Virgo vultui conditoris prece potentissima, semper interpellans pro nobis.

‡ Videt enim nostra discrimina, nostrique clemens Domina materno affectu miseretur.

§ Inveniet semper paratam auxiliari.

that Mary is every ready to pray for all.*

And oh, with how much efficacy and love, St. Bernard exclaims, this good advocate of ours conducts the cause of our salvation!† St. Augustine, contemplating the affection and earnestness with which Mary is continually occupied in interceding with the divine Majesty for us, that the Lord may pardon our sins, assist us with his grace, free us from dangers, and relieve us from our miseries, thus addresses the holy Virgin:‡ Oh Lady! it is true that all the saints desire our salvation and pray for us; but the charity and tenderness which thou dost manifest for us in heaven, by obtaining with thy prayers so many mercies from God, obliges us to confess, that we have in heaven only one advocate, that is thyself, and that thou alone art the only true lover watchful of our welfare. And who can comprehend the solicitude with which Mary is always waiting on God in our behalf? St. Germanus says: She is never satisfied with defending us: "Non est satietas defensionis ejus." The expression is beautiful. So great is the pity which Mary has for our miseries, and so great is the love she bears us, that she prays always, and prays again and is never satisfied with praying for us, and defend-

* Ipsa pro universo mundo paratissima est ad precandum.

† Advocatam præmisit peregrinatio nostra; quæ tamquam judicis mater, et mater misericordiæ, suppliciter et efficaciter salutis nostræ negocia pertractabit. Serm. 1, de Ass.

‡ Unam te ac solam pro nobis in cœlo fatemur esse sollicitam. Ap. in Spec. lect. 6.

ing us from evil with her prayers, and obtaining for us favors—she is never satisfied with defending us.

What poor sinners we should be if we had not this advocate, so powerful and so merciful, and at the same time so prudent and so wise, that the judge, her Son, cannot condemn the guilty, if she defends them, as Richard of St. Laurence says.* Well then, does St. John (the geometrician) salute her: Hail, authority which puts an end to strife.† For all the causes defended by this most wise advocate are gained. Hence Mary is called by St. Bonaventure, the wise Abigail "Abigail sapiens." This was the woman who, as we read in the first of Kings, knew so well how to appease King David, by her persuasive entreaties, when he was full of indignation against Nabal, that he himself blessed and thanked her for having with her sweet words, prevented him from revenging himself upon Nabal with his own hands.‡ Precisely the same thing does Mary continually in heaven, in behalf of innumerable sinners: she knows so well how to appease the divine justice with her tender and wise entreaties, that God himself blesses her for it, and as it were thanks her, that thus

* Tam prudens et diserta est advocata Maria, quod non potest filius vindicare in eos, pro quibus ipsa allegat. De Laud. v. l. 2, p. 2.

† Salve jus dirimens lites. Ap. Pep. Lez. to. 5.

‡ Benedicta tu, quæ prohibuisti me hodie, ne ulciscerer me manu mea. C. XXV.

she restrains him from abandoning and punishing them as they deserve. For this end, says St. Bernard, the eternal Father, desirous to show all possible compassion towards us, besides Jesus Christ, our principal advocate with himself, has given us Mary for our advocate with Jesus Christ.

There is no doubt, says St. Bernard, that Jesus is the only mediator of justice between men and God, who in virtue of his merits can, and according to his promises will, obtain for us pardon and divine grace; but because men recognize and fear in Jesus Christ the divine majesty, which dwells in him as God, it was necessary that another advocate should be assigned to us, to whom we could have recourse with less fear and more confidence; and this is Mary, than whom we can find no advocate more powerful with the divine majesty and more compassionate towards us.* But he would greatly wrong the mercy of Mary, continues the saint, who should still fear to cast himself at the feet of this most sweet advocate, who is in nothing severe or terrible, but is in all things kind, lovely, and compassionate.† Read and revolve as much as you will all the history found in the Gospel, and if you find any act of austerity in Mary, then fear

* Fidelis et potens mediator Dei et hominum: sed divinam reverentur in eo homines majestatem, opus est enim mediatore ad mediatorem ipsum; nec alter nobis utilior quam Maria. Serm. in Sign. Magn.

† Quid ad Mariam accedere trepidet humana fragilitas? Nihil austerum in ea, nihil terribile, tota suavis est.

to approach her. But you will never find any; go then joyfully to her, for she will save thee by her intercession.*

Exceedingly beautiful is the exclamation which William of Paris puts in the mouth of a sinner who has recourse to Mary: Oh mother of my God, I come to thee full of confidence, even in the miserable state to which I find myself reduced by my sins; if thou dost reject me, I will plead with thee, for in a certain sense thou art bound to help me since all the Church of the faithful calls thee and proclaims thee mother of mercy.† Thou, oh Mary, art so dear to God that he always graciously listens to thee; thy great mercy has never failed; thy most sweet condescension has never despised any sinner, however enormous his sins, who has had recourse to thee.‡ What! could the whole Church falsely and in vain name thee her advocate and the refuge of sinners?§ No, never be it said that my sins prevent thee, oh my mother, from exercising the great office of mercy which thou

* Revolve diligentius evangelicæ historiæ seriem universam, et si quid forte durum occurrerit in Maria, ad eam accedere verearis, Serm. in Sign. Magn.

† Adibo te imo etiam conveniam, gloriosissima Dei genitrix, quam matrem misericordiæ vocat, imo clamitat omnis eccles a sanctorum. De Reth. Div. c. 18.

‡ Tu, inquam, cujus gratiositas nunquam repulsam patitur, cujus misericordia nulli unquam defuit; cujus benignissima humanitas nullum unquam deprecantem quantumcumque peccatorem despexit.

§ An falso aut inaniter vocat te omnis Ecclesia advocatam suam, et miserorum refugium?

dost hold, by which thou art at the same time the advocate and mediator of peace between God and man, and next to thy Son the only hope and refuge of sinners.* Whatever of grace and glory is thine, even the dignity of being mother of God itself, if I may so speak, thou owest to sinners, since for their sake the divine Word has made thee his mother.† Far from this divine mother who has brought forth unto the world the fountain of mercy, be the thought that she, could refuse her compassion to any sinner who recommends himself to her.‡ Since, then, oh Mary, thy office is that of peacemaker between God and man, may thy great mercy, which far exceeds all my sins, move thee to aid me.§

Console yourselves, then, oh ye faint of heart, I will say with St. Thomas of Villanova, take heart, oh miserable sinners; this great Virgin, who is the mother of your judge and God, is the advocate of the human race. Powerful and able to obtain whatever she wishes from God; most

* Absit, ut peccata mea possint suspendere te a tam salubri officio pietatis; quo et advocata es, et mediatrix hominum, post filium tuum spes unica et refugium tutissimum miserorum.

† Totum siquidem quod habes gratiæ, totum quod habes gloriæ, et etiam hoc ipsum quod mater es Dei, si fas est dicere, ob peccatores tibi collata sunt.

‡ Absit hoc a matre Dei, quæ fontem pietatis toti mundo perit, ut cuique miserorum suæ misericordiæ subventionem unquam neget.

§ Officium ergo tuum est te mediam interponere inter ipsum et homines. Moveat te gloriosa Dei mater, benignissima misericordia tua, quæ major est incogitabiliter omnibus vitiis meis et peccatis. D. c. 18, de Reth. Div.

wise, for she knows every method of appeasing him; universal, for she welcomes all, and refuses to defend none.*

EXAMPLE.

Our advocate has shown how great is her kindness towards sinners by her mercy to Beatrice, a nun in the monastery of Fontebraldo, as related by Cesarius,† and by Father Rho.‡ This unhappy religious, having contracted a passion for a certain youth, agreed to flee with him from the convent; and in fact she went one day before a statue of the blessed Virgin, there deposited the keys of the monastery, for she was portress, and boldly departed. Arrived in another country, she led the miserable life of a prostitute for fifteen years. It happened that she met, one day, the agent of the monastery in the city where she was living, and asked of him, thinking he would not recognize her again, if he knew sister Beatrice? "I knew her well," he said: "she is a holy nun, and at present is mistress of novices." At this intelligence she was confounded and amazed, not knowing how to understand it. In order to ascertain the truth, she put on another dress and went to the monastery. She asked for sister Beatrice, and behold, the most holy Virgin appeared before her in the form of that same image to which at parting she had committed

* Consolamini pusillanimos; respirate miserabiles; Virgo Deipara est humani generis advocata; idonea, sapientissima, universalis. In Rog. pro exp. adv. Turc. susc.

† L. 7, c. 25. ‡ In Ex.

her keys, and her dress, and the divine mother thus spoke to her: "Beatrice, be it known to thee that, in order to prevent thy disgrace, I assumed thy form, and have filled thy office for the fifteen years that thou hast lived far from the monastery and from God. My child, return, and do penance, for my Son is still waiting for thee; and strive by thy holy life to preserve the good name I have gained thee." She spoke thus and disappeared Beatrice re-entered the monastery, resumed the habit of a religious, and, grateful for the mercy of Mary, led the life of a saint. At her death she made known the foregoing incident, to the glory of this great queen.

PRAYER.

Oh great mother of my Lord, I now see that the ingratitude shown by me for so many years to God and to thee, would justly merit that thou shouldst abandon all care of me, for the ungrateful are no more worthy of favors. But, oh Lady, I have a great idea of thy goodness; I believe it to be far greater than my ingratitude; continue, then, oh refuge of sinners, to help a miserable sinner who confides in thee. Oh mother of mercy, extend thy hand to raise a poor fallen creature who implores thy mercy. Oh Mary, defend thou me, or tell me to whom I shall have recourse, and who can protect me better than thou. Can I find an advocate with God more merciful and more powerful than thou, who art his mother? Thou having been created for the mother of the Sav-

iour, art destined to save sinners, and hast been given me for my salvation. Oh Mary, save him who has recourse to thee. I do not merit thy love, but the desire thou hast to save the lost gives me the hope that thou dost love me; and if thou lovest me, how can I be lost? Oh my beloved mother, if, as I hope, I am saved by thee, I will no longer be ungrateful; I will make amends by perpetual praises and by all the affection of my soul for my past ingratitude, and will make some return for the love thou bearest me. In heaven, where thou reignest and wilt reign forever, I will always joyfully sing thy mercies, and forever I will kiss those loving hands that have freed me from hell as often as I have deserved it for my sins. Oh Mary, my liberator, my hope, my queen, my advocate, my mother, I love thee, I wish thee well, and will always love thee. Amen, amen; thus I hope, so may it be.

SECTION III.

MARY IS THE PEACE-MAKER BETWEEN SINNERS AND GOD.

The grace of God is a treasure, very great and most earnestly to be desired by every soul. It is called by the Holy Spirit an infinite treasure, since by means of divine grace we are raised to the honor of being made the friends of God: "She is an infinite treasure to men, which they that use become the friends of God."* Whence it is

* Infinitus est thesaurus, quo qui usi sunt, participes facti sunt amicitiæ Dei. Sap. vii. 14.

that Jesus, our Redeemer and God, did not hesitate to call those who are in grace, his friends: You are my friends: "Vos amici mei estis."* Oh accursed sin that loosens the ties of this blessed friendship: "Your iniquities have divided between you and your God:"† for they make the soul hateful to God, and from a friend it becomes an enemy of the Lord: "To God the wicked and his wickedness are hateful alike."‡ What, then, must a sinner do who finds himself so unhappy as to have become an enemy of God? He must find a mediator who will obtain pardon for him and enable him to recover the lost friendship of God. Take courage, says St. Bernard, oh sinner, who has lost God. Thy Lord himself hath given thee a mediator, even his Son Jesus Christ who can obtain for thee whatever thou desirest.§

But, oh God, the saint here exclaims, why do men esteem severe this most merciful Saviour, who hath given his life for our salvation? Why do they look upon him as terrible who is all loveliness? Distrustful sinners, say, why do you fear? If you fear because you have offended God, remember that Jesus with his own lacerated hands has nailed your sins to the cross,

* Joan. xv. 14.

† Iniquitates vestræ diviserunt inter vos et Deum vestrum! Is. lix. 2.

‡ Odio sunt Deo impius et impietas ejus. Sap. xiv. 9.

§ Jesum tibi dedit mediatorem; quid non apud talem patrem filius talis obtineat. Serm. de Aquæd.

and having satisfied the divine justice for them by his death, he has removed them from your soul.* But if ever, adds the saint, you fear to have recourse to Jesus Christ because his divine majesty alarms you, since when he became man he did not cease to be God, if you ever wish for another advocate with this mediator, invoke Mary, for she will intercede for you with the Son, who will surely graciously listen to ner, and the Son will intercede with the Father, who can refuse nothing to this Son.† And so, concludes St. Bernard, this divine mother, oh my children, is the ladder of sinners, by which they ascend anew to the height of divine grace. This is my greatest confidence—this is the whole ground of my hope.‡

Let us hear what the Holy Spirit makes the blessed Virgin say in the sacred Canticles:§ I am, says Mary, the defence of those who have recourse to me, and my mercy is to them a tower of refuge;for this I have been appointed by my Lord as a peacemaker between sinners and him. Cardinal Hugo, on the same text, says, that Mary is

* Serverum imaginantur, qui pius est, terribilem, qui amabilis est. Quid timetis modicæ fidei? Peccata affixit cruci suis manibus.

† Sed forsitan et in ipso majestatem vereare divinam, quod licet factus sit homo, manserit tamen Deus. Advocatum habere vis et apud ipsum? recurre ad Mariam; exaudiet utique matrem filius, et exaudiet filium Pater.

‡ Filioli, hæc peccatorum scala, hæc maxima mea fiducia est, hæc tota ratio spei meæ. Cit. Serm. de Aquæd.

§ Ego murus; et ubera mea sicut turris, ex quo facta sum coram eo quasi pacem reperiens. Cant. c. viii. v. 10.

the great peacemaker who obtains from God, and gives peace to enemies, salvation to the lost, pardon to sinners, and mercy to the despairing.* For this reason she was called by her divine spouse: Beautiful as the curtains of Solomon: "Formosa sicut pelles Salomonis."† In the tents of David there was nothing treated of but war, but in the tents of Solomon peace alone was spoken of. The Holy Spirit giving us to understand by this, that the mother of mercy does not treat of war and of vengeance against sinners, but only of peace and the pardon of their offences.

Again, Mary was prefigured by Noe's dove, who returned to the ark bearing in her beak the olive-branch, as a sign of the peace which God granted to men. Wherefore St. Bonaventur says: Thou art that most faithful dove, which, mediating with God, hath obtained for the world, which was lost, peace and salvation. Mary, then, was the heavenly dove who brought to the lost world the olive-branch, a sign of mercy;‡ for she gave us Jesus Christ, who is the fountain of mercy,§ and thus obtained, by the price of his merits, all the graces which God

* Ipsa reperit pacem inimicis, salutem perditis, indulgentiam reis, misericordiam desperatis.

† Cant. i. 4.

‡ Tu enim es illa fidelissima columba Noe, quæ inter Deum et mundum diluvio spirituali submersum mediatrix fidelissima extitisti.

‡ Nam ipsa Christum nobis detulit fontem misericordiæ. P. Spinell.

gives us. And as through Mary the world received celestial peace,* as St. Epiphanius says, so by means of Mary sinners are constantly becoming reconciled to God. In the same way, the blessed Albertus Magnus says in her name: I am that dove of Noe, who brought to the Church universal peace.†

Moreover, the rainbow seen by St. John, that surrounded the throne of God, was also an exact type of Mary.‡ According to the explanation of Cardinal Vitalis, Mary is always before the divine tribunal to mitigate the sentence and punishment due to the sinner.§ And St. Bernardine of Sienna says, that it was of this rainbow that the Lord spoke, when he said to Noe that he would place in the clouds the bow of peace, that when he should see it he might remember the eternal covenant that he had established with men.‖ And Mary, says St. Bernardine, is that very bow of eternal peace.¶ For as God, at the sight of the bow, remembers the peace promised to the earth, thus at the prayers of Mary he pardons sinners the offences com-

* Per te pax cœlestis donata est.

† Ego sum columba Noe, Ecclesiæ ramum olivæ et pacis inferens universalis. In Bibl. Mar. lib. Cant. n. 16.

‡ Et Iris erat in circuitu sedis. Apoc. c. iv. 3.

§ Iris in circuitu sedis est Maria, quæ mitigat Dei judicium et sententiam contra peccatores. In Spec. S. Script.

‖ Arcum meum ponam in nubibus, et erit signum fœderis inter me et terram . . . Videbo illum, et recordabor fœderis sempiterni. Gen. ix. 13.

¶ Ipsa est arcus fœderis sempiterni. Serm. 1, de No. Mar. Art. 1, c. 3.

mitted against him, and establishes peace with them.*

For the same reason Mary is also compared to the moon.† For, St. Bonaventure says, as the moon is in the midst between heaven and earth, so she continually interposes between God and sinners, that she may appease the Lord towards them, and enlighten them on their return to God.‡

And this was the most important office given to Mary when she was placed upon the earth—of lifting the souls fallen from divine grace, and reconciling them to God. Feed thy kids: "Pasce hædos tuos."§ This was said to her by the Lord when he created her. It is well known that sinners are represented by goats; and as the elect, represented by sheep, will be placed on the right hand in the valley of judgment, the goats will be placed on the left. Now these goats, says William of Paris, are committed to thee, oh great mother, that thou mayest change them into sheep, and that those who, by their sins, have merited to be banished to the left, by thy intercession may be placed on the right.‖ Hence the Lord revealed to St.

* Fructus iridis est recordatio divini fœderis; sic per virginem gloriosam offensa eis remittitur, fœdus stringitur. Serm. in Apoc. c. 41.

† Pulchra ut Luna. Cant. vi. 9.

‡ Sicut Luna est media inter corpora cœlestia et terrena, et quod ab illis accipit ad inferiora refundit; sic et virgo regia inter nos et Deum est media, et gratiam ipsa nobis refundit. Serm. 14, de Nat. Dom.

§ Cant. i. 8.

‖ Pasce hædos tuos, quos convertis in oves, et qui a sinistris in

Catherine of Sienna that he had created this his beloved child as a sweet bait, that would draw men, and especially sinners, to God.* And here we should note the beautiful reflection of William, the Englishman, on the passage above cited, who says, that God recommends to Mary her own goats, "hædos tuos;" because the Virgin does not save all sinners, but only those who serve and honor her. Those, on the contrary, who live in sin, and do not honor her with any special devotion, neither recommend themselves to her in order to escape from their sins, are not the goats of Mary, but in the judgment will be placed miserably on the left among the damned.†

A certain nobleman who was despairing of his eternal salvation on account of his sins, was encouraged by a religious to have recourse to the most holy Virgin, by visiting her sacred image which was in a certain church. The nobleman went to the church, and on seeing the figure of Mary he felt himself, as it were, invited by her to cast himself at her feet and trust. He hastens to do so, kisses her feet, and Mary, from that statue, extended her hand for him to

judicio erant collocandi, tua intercessione collocantur a dextris.

* Hæc est a me electa tanquam esca dulcissima ad capiendos homines, potissimum peccatores. Ap. Blos. Monil. Spir.

† Suos vocat quia non omnes hædi vocantur Mariæ, sed qui Mariam colunt ac venerantur, licet sceleribus contaminati. Qui vero peccatis irretiti sunt, nec B. Virginem speciali obsequio prosequuntur, nec preces fundunt in ejus cultum, ut aliquando resipiscant, hædi profecto sunt non Mariæ, sed ad sinistram judicis sistendi.

kiss, and on it he saw these words written: "I will deliver thee from them that afflict thee." * As if she had said to him: My son, do not despair, for I will deliver thee from thy sins, and from the fears that oppress thee. It is related that on reading these sweet words, that sinner felt such sorrow for his sins, and conceived such a love for God, and for his sweet mother, that he died there at the feet of Mary. Oh, how many obstinate sinners does this magnet of hearts draw daily to God, as she herself said to St Bridget: "As the magnet attracts to itself iron, thus I draw to myself the most obdurate hearts, that I may reconcile them to God;†" and this prodigy is not rarely, but daily experienced. I could myself testify to many cases that have occurred in our missions alone, where sinners who have remained harder than iron during all other sermons, while hearing that on the mercy of Mary, were touched with compunction, and turned to God. St. Gregory relates that the unicorn is so ferocious a wild beast, that no hunter can succeed in taking it; but at the voice of a maiden who calls upon him to surrender, he draws near, and without resistance allows himself to be bound by her. Oh, how many sinners, more fierce than wild beasts, who flee from God, at the sound of the voice of this great Virgin Mary, advance and allow themselves to be gently bound by her to God!

* Ego eripiam te de affligentibus te.
† Sicut magnes attrahit ferrum sic ego attraho dura corda. L. 4, Rev. c. 32.

For this end, says St. John Chrysostom, the Virgin Mary was made mother of God, that those sinners who, by reason of their wicked life, could not be saved according to the divine justice, might obtain salvation through her sweet compassion and powerful intercession.* St. Anselm confirms this when he says that Mary has been exalted to be mother of God for sinners rather than for the just, since Jesus Christ announced that he came not to call the just, but sinners.† And so the holy Church sings: "Sinners thou dost not abhor, since but for them thou never wouldst have been worthy of such a Son."‡ William of Paris also says: Oh Mary, thou art obliged to help sinners, since for all the gifts, graces, and honors thou dost possess, which are comprehended in the dignity thou hast received of being the mother of God, for all, if I may so speak, thou art indebted to sinners, since for their sakes thou wert made worthy to have a God for thy Son.§ If, then, concludes St. Anselm, Mary, for the sake of sinners, has been made mother of God, how can

* Ideo mater Dei præelecta es ab eterno; ut quos justitia filii salvare non potest, tu per tuam salvares pietatem. Hom. de Præs. B. V.

† Scio illam magis propter peccatores, quam propter justos, factam esse Dei Matrem; dixit enim ejus bonus filius se non venisse vocare justos, sed peccatores.

‡ Peccatores non abhorres, sine quibus nunquam fores tanto digna filio.

§ Totum quod habes, si fas est dicere, peccatoribus debest omnia enim propter peccatores tibi collata sunt. De Reth. Div. c. 18.

I, however great may be my sins, despair of pardon?*

The holy Church teaches us, in the collect of the Mass for the Vigil of the Assumption, that the divine mother has been removed from this earth that she might intercede for us with God, in sure confidence of being graciously heard.† Hence Mary is named by St. Justinian, Arbitress: "Sequestra." The Word employed as arbitress.‡ *Sequester* signifies the same as arbiter, one to whom two contending parties refer all their questions; so that the saint means to say, that as Jesus is mediator with the eternal Father, so Mary is our mediatrix with Jesus, to whom the Son refers all the charges which, as judge he has against us.

Mary is called by St. Andrew of Crete, the confidence and security of our reconciliation with God.§ And by this the saint intends to say, that God seeks a reconciliation with sinners by pardoning them, and that they may not despair of pardon, he has given them Mary as a pledge of it; hence he salutes her: Hail, oh peace of God with men: "Salve divina homin-

* Si ipsa propter peccatores facta est Dei mater, quomodo immanitas peccatorum meorum cogere poterit desperare veniam? De Exc. v. c. 1.

† Quam idcirco de hoc sæculo transtulit, ut apud te pro peccatis nostris fiducialiter intercedat.

‡ Verbum usum est Virgine sequestra.

§ Divinarum reconciliationem, quæ pignore accepto fit, Fidejussio Or. 2, de Aff.

ibus reconciliatio." Wherefore St. Bonaventure says, encouraging every sinner: If thou fearest, on account of thy sins, that an angry God may wish to avenge himself upon thee, what art thou to do? Go to the hope of sinners, namely, Mary; and if thou fearest that she will refuse to take thy part, know that she cannot refuse to defend thy cause, for God himself has assigned her the office of relieving the wretched.*

And what does the Abbot Adam say? Should a sinner fear being lost, to whom the mother of his judge offers herself as his mother and advocate?† And then the same writer adds: Oh Mary! who art mother of mercy, couldst thou refuse to pray thy Son, who is judge, for another son, who is the criminal? Canst thou refuse to intercede in behalf of a redeemed soul with the Redeemer, who, for no other end than to save sinners, died on the cross?‡ No, thou wilt not refuse, but earnestly wilt employ thyself in praying for all those who invoke thee, well knowing that the same Lord who hath constituted thy Son mediator of peace between God and man, has at the same time made thee mediatrix between the Judge and the criminal.§ Here

* Si propter tuas nequitias Dominum videris indignatum, ad spem peccatorum confugias; sibi pro miseris satisfacere ex officio commissum est.

† Timere ne debet ut pereat, cui Maria se matrem exhibet, et advocatam.

‡ Tu misericordiæ mater non rogabis pro filio filium, pro redempto redemptorem?

§ Rogabis plane quia qui filium tuum inter Deum et hominem posuit mediatorem, te quoque inter reum, et judicem posuit adjutricem.

St. Bernard takes up the subject, and says: Give then thanks to him who has provided thee with such a mediatrix.* Whoever thou art, oh sinner, plunged in the mire of guilt, hoary in sin, do not despair; thank thy Lord, who in order to show mercy to thee, has not only given thee his Son for an advocate, but, to increase thy confidence and courage, has provided thee with such a mediatrix, who, by her prayers, obtains whatever she wishes. Have recourse to Mary, and thou wilt be saved.

EXAMPLE.

It is related by Rupensis,† and by Boniface,‡ that in Florence there lived a young girl, named Benedetta (the blessed), although she might better have been called Maladetta (the cursed), from the scandalous and wicked life she led. Happily for her, St. Dominic happened to preach in that city, and she, from mere curiosity, went one day to hear him. But the Lord touched her heart during the sermon, so that, weeping bitterly, she went to make her confession to the saint. St. Dominic heard her confession, gave her absolution, and directed her to say the rosary. But the unhappy girl, by the force of her evil habits, returned to her wicked life. The saint heard of it, and going to her, induced her to con-

* Age gratias ei, qui talem tibi mediatricem providit. Serm. in Sign. Magn.

† Ros. Sacr. p. 5, c. 60.

‡ Stor. Virg. l. 1, c. 11.

fess once more. God, in order to confirm her in her good life, one day showed hell to her, and some persons there who had been already condemned on her account. Then opening a book, he made her read in it the frightful record of her sins. The pentitent shuddered at the sight, and, full of confidence, had recourse to Mary, asked her help, and learned that this divine mother had already obtained from God for her time enough to mourn for her numerous sins. The vision disappeared, and Benedetta devoted herself to a good life; but seeing always open before her eyes that dark catalogue, she one day prayed in these words to her consoler: "Oh mother, it is true that for my sins I should now be deep in hell; but since thou, by thy intercession, hast liberated me from it, by obtaining for me time for repentance, most merciful Lady, I ask of thee one other favor. I will never cease to weep for my sins; but do thou obtain for me that they may be cancelled from that book." After this prayer, Mary appeared to her, and told her that in order to obtain what she asked, she must preserve an eternal remembrance of her sins, and of the mercy of God towards her; and still more, that she must meditate on the passion of her Son, which he suffered for love of her; and also that she must bear in mind that many had been damned who had committed fewer sins than she had done. She also revealed her that a child of only eight years of age, for one mortal sin only, had been that day condemn-

ed to hell. Benedetta having faithfully obeyed the most holy Virgin, one day beheld Jesus Christ, who showed her that book, and said to her: Behold, thy sins are cancelled; the book is white, inscribe on it now acts of love and of virtue. Benedetta did this, led a holy life, and died a holy death.

PRAYER.

Then, oh my most sweet Lady, if thy office is, as William of Paris says, to interpose as a mediatrix between the sinner and God,* I will say to thee with St. Thomas of Villanova: Ah, then, oh our advocate, fulfil thy office.† Fulfil at once thy office also in my behalf. Do not tell me that my cause is too difficult to be gained; for I know, and all tell me, that no cause, however desperate, if defended by thee, was ever lost; and will mine be lost? No, I fear not this. I have only to fear, when I behold the multitude of my sins, that thou wilt not undertake my defence; but considering thy vast compassion and the great desire that fills thy most loving heart to help the vilest sinners, I no longer fear even this. And who was ever lost that had recourse to thee? I invoke, then, thy aid, oh my great advocate, my refuge, my hope, and my mother Mary. To thy hands I commit the cause of my eternal salvation. To thee I consign my soul;

* Officium tuum est, te mediam interponere inter Deum et nos omnes.

† Ea ergo advocata nostra officium tuum impie.

it was lost, but thou must save it. I always thank the Lord that he gives me this great confidence in thee, which, notwithstanding my unworthiness, I believe will secure my salvation. One fear alone remains to afflict me, my beloved queen: it is, that I may one day lose, through my neglect, this confidence in thee. Therefore I pray thee, oh Mary, by all thy love for thy Jesus, to preserve and increase more and more in me this most sweet confidence in thy intercession, by which I certainly hope to recover the divine friendship, which I have hitherto so foolishly despised and lost; and once having recovered it, I hope by thy means to preserve it; and preserving it, I hope finally through thee to go one day and thank thee for it in paradise, and there to sing the mercies of God and thine through all eternity. Amen. Thus I hope, so may it be, and so it *shall be!*

CHAPTER VII.

ILLOS TUOS MISERICORDES OCULOS AD NOS CONVERTE.

Turn thy eyes of mercy towards us.

SECTION I.

MARY IS ALL EYES TO PITY AND RELIEVE OUR MISERIES.

St. Epiphanius calls the blessed Virgin, "Multoculam;" that is, one who has many eyes, that she may relieve our miseries on this earth. One day, when a person possessed was being exorcised, the devil was asked by the exorcist what Mary was then doing. The Evil One replied: "She is descending and ascending;"* by which he intended to say, that this gracious Lady does nothing else than descend upon the earth to bring graces to men, and ascend to heaven to obtain there the divine blessing on our supplications. Rightly, then, was the holy Virgin named by St. Andrew of Avellino, the active power of paradise; for she is continually employed in deeds of mercy, imploring favors for all, for the just and for sinners. "The eyes of the Lord are upon the just," says David;† but the eyes of our Lady are upon the

* Ap. il P. Pep. to. 5, Lec. 235.
† Oculi Domini super justos. Ps. xxxiii. 16.

just and upon sinners,* as Richard of St. Laurence says; for he adds: The eyes of Mary are the eyes of a mother; and the mother not only guards her child from falling, but if he falls, she hastens to raise him.†

Jesus himself revealed this to St. Bridget, whom the saint heard one day speaking to his mother, and saying: "Ask of me, oh my mother, whatever thou dost desire;"‡ and the Son is always in heaven saying this to Mary, pleased with granting his beloved mother whatever she asks. But what does Mary ask? St. Bridget understood the mother to answer him: I ask mercy for sinners: "Misericordiam peto pro miseris."§ As if she would say, my Son, thou hast already destined me for the mother of mercy, for the refuge of sinners, for the advocate of the miserable, now thou sayest to me that I may ask whatever I wish; but what would I ask of thee? I ask of thee that thou wilt have mercy on the sinner: "Misericordiam peto pro miseris." Thou art, oh Mary, so full of compassion, St. Bonaventure tenderly says to her, thou art so watchful to relieve the wretched, that it seems thou hast no other desire, no other concern than this.‖ And because, among the wretched sinners are the most wretched of

* Sed oculi Dominæ super justos et peccatores.

† Sicut oculi matris ad puerum ne cadat, vel si ceciderit, ut cum sublevet.

‡ Mater pete quod vis a me. § Rev. l. 1. c. 46.

‖ Undique sollicita es de miseris, misericordia vallaris, solum misereri videris appetere. Sup. Salve Reg.

all, the venerable Bede affirms, that Mary is continually praying the Son in behalf of sinners.*

Even whilst on earth Mary was so kind and tender to men that, as St. Jerome says, there never was any person so afflicted by his own sufferings as Mary by the sufferings of others.† She plainly showed the compassion she feels for the sufferings of others at the nuptials of Cana (as has been mentioned in previous chapters), where, as when the wine failed, without being requested, as St. Bernardine of Sienna remarks, she assumed the office of a kind comforter.‡ And from mere compassion for the troubles of that family, she interceded with her Son, and obtained the miracle of changing the water into wine.

But, perhaps, says St. Peter Damian, since thou wast exalted to the dignity of queen of heaven, thou hast forgotten the wretched; and then he adds, let this never be thought of—it does not belong to a mercy so great as that which reigns in the heart of Mary, to forget such misery as ours.§ The common proverb, honors change customs, "Honores mutant mores," certainly does not apply to Mary. It, indeed,

* Stat Maria in conspectu filii sui non cessans pro peccatoribus exorare. In cap. i. Luc.

† Nullum in hac vita adeo pœnæ torserunt propriæ sicut Mariam alienæ. Epist. ad Eust.

‡ Officium piæ auxiliatricis assumpsit non rogata.

§ Nunquid, O Beata Virgo, quia ita glorificata es, ideo nostræ humilitatis oblita es? Absit, non convenit tantæ misericordiæ tantæ miseriæ oblivisci. Serm. 1, de Nat. Virg.

applies to worldlings who, when raised to any dignity, become inflated with pride, and forget their old and poor friends: but not to Mary, who rejoices in her greater exaltation, because it gives her more power to assist others. Considering this point, St. Bonaventure applies to the blessed Virgin the words spoken to Ruth: "Blessed art thou, my daughter, and thy latter kindness has surpassed the former." * Meaning, as he afterwards explains, that if the pity of Mary for the unhappy was great when she lived on earth, much greater is it now when she is reigning in heaven.† The saint gives the reason for this by saying, that the divine mother shows now, by the innumerable favors she obtains for us, this her increased compassion, because now she better understands our miseries.‡ And he adds, that as the splendor of the sun exceeds that of the moon, so the mercy of Mary, now that she is in heaven, exceeds the mercy she had for us when she was upon the earth.§ And is there any one living on the earth who does not enjoy the light of the sun?—any one on whom this mercy of Mary does not shine?‖

* Benedicta filia priorem misericordiam posteriore superasti. Ruth iii. 10.

† Magna fuit erga miseros misericordia Mariæ adhuc exulantis mundo, sed multo major est regnantis in cœlo. In Spec, B. V. c. 8.

‡ Majorem per innumerabilia beneficia nunc ostendit misericordiam; quia magis nunc videt hominum miserias.

§ Nam quemadmodum sol lunam superat magnitudine splendoris, sic priorem Mariæ misericordiam superat magnitudo superioris.

‖ Quis est super quem misericordia Mariæ non resplendet? Loc. cit.

On this account she is called bright as the sun, "Electa ut sol;"* because no one is shut out from the heat of this sun,† as St. Bonaventure says. And St. Agnes revealed this from heaven to St. Bridget, when she said to her, that our queen, now that she is united with her Son in heaven, cannot forget her innate goodness; hence she exercises her compassion towards all, even towards the most impious sinners, so that as both the celestial and terrestrial bodies are illuminated by the sun, thus through the goodness of Mary, there is no one in the world who does not, if he asks for it, share in the divine mercy.‡ A great and desperate sinner, in the kingdom of Valencia, in order to escape justice, had resolved to become a Turk, and was actually going to embark, when by chance he passed a church, in which Father Jerome Lopez, of the Company of Jesus, was preaching, and preaching of the divine mercy; by that preaching he was converted, and confessed to the father, who inquired of him if he had practised any devotion, for which God had shown towards him that great mercy; he answered that he had practised no other devotion than praying the holy Virgin every day not to abandon him.§ The same

* Cant. vi. 9.

† Non est qui se abscondat a calore ejus.

‡ Nunc autem conjuncta filio non obliviscitur innatæ bonitatis suæ, sed ad omnes extendit misericordiam suam, etiam ad pessimos; ut sicut sole illuminantur cœlestia et terrestria, sic ex dulcedine Mariæ nullus est qui non per eam, si petitur sentiat pietatem. L. 3, Rev. c. 30.

§ Patrign. Men. 2, Feb.

Father found in the hospital a sinner, who for fifty-five years had never been to confession, and had only practised this little devotion, that when he saw an image of Mary he saluted it, and prayed to her that he might not die in mortal sin; and then he related that in a quarrel with an enemy, his sword was broken, and he turned to the Madonna, saying: "Alas, I shall be slain, damned; oh mother of sinners, help me." When he had said this, he found himself, he knew not how, transported into a secure place. He made a general confession, and died full of confidence.*

St. Bernard writes that Mary becomes all things to all men, and opens to all the bowels of her mercy, that all may receive of her; the captive his freedom; the sick man health; the afflicted consolation; the sinner pardon, and God glory: hence there is no one, since she is the sun, who does not partake of her warmth.† And is there any one in the world, exclaims St. Bonaventure, who will not love this lovely queen? She is more beautiful than the sun, and sweeter than honey; she is a treasure of goodness, and is kind and courteous to all.‡ I salute thee,

* Patr. Men. 2, Feb.

† Maria omnia omnibus facta est; omnibus misericordiæ sinum aperit, ut de plenitudine ejus accipiant omnes, captivus, redemptionem, æger curationem, tristis consolationem, peccator veniam; ut non sit qui se abscondat a calore ejus. In Sig. Mag.

‡ Quis te non diliget, O Maria, pulchriorem sole, dulciorem melle, omnibus amabilis, omnibus affabilis?

then, thus the enamored saint goes on to say, oh my Lady and mother! my heart! my soul! Pardon me, oh Mary, if I say that I love thee: if I am not worthy of loving thee, thou art truly worthy of being loved by me.*

It was revealed to St. Gertrude,† that when any one repeats with devotion these words to the Virgin: "Turn, then, towards us, oh our advocate, thy pitying eyes,"‡ Mary never fails to listen to the prayer. Oh, let the immensity of thy mercy, oh great Lady, fill the whole earth, exclaims St. Bernard.§ Whence St. Bonaventure says, that this loving mother has such a desire to do good to all, that she feels herself offended not only by those who offer her some positive injury, for there are souls to be found so perverse, especially gamesters, who sometimes, to vent their anger, blaspheme and insult this good Lady, but she looks upon herself as injured by those, also, who neglect to ask of her some favor.‖ So that, as St. Idelbert says, thou dost instruct us, oh Lady, to expect favors greater than our merits, for thou dost never cease to dis-

* Ave ergo, Domina mea, mater mea; imo cor meum, anima mea, parce mihi, Domina, si me amare te dicam; si ego non sum digna te amare, tu non es digna amari a me. Stim. p. 5, c. 19.

† Rev. l. 4, c. 53.

‡ Eja ergo; advocata nostra, illos tuos misericordes oculos ad nos converte.

§ Latitudo misericordiæ tuæ replet orbem terrarum. Serm. 4, Sup. Miss.

‖ In te, Domina, peccant, non solum qui tibi injuriam irrogant, sed etiam qui te non rogant. In Spec. Virg.

pense graces that far exceed what we merit.*

The prophet Isaias predicted that by the great work of human redemption, a great throne of divine mercy would be prepared for us: "A throne shall be prepared in mercy."† Who is this throne? St. Bonaventure answers: This throne is Mary, in whom all, both the just and sinners, find the consolations of mercy;‡ and he afterwards adds: As the Lord is full of compassion, so also is our Lady; and as the Son, so the mother cannot withhold her mercy from those who ask it.§ Hence Guerric, the abbot, represents Jesus thus speaking to Mary: My mother, upon thee I will establish the seat of my kingdom, for through thee will I bestow the graces that are asked of me: thou hast given me the human nature; I will give to thee, as it were, a divine nature, that is, my omnipotence, by which thou canst assist all who invoke thee to obtain their salvation.‖

When St. Gertrude was one day devoutly re-

* Doce nos sperare majora meritis, quæ meritis majora largiri non desinis.

† Præparabitur in misericordia solium ejus. Isa. xvi. 5.

‡ Solium divinæ misericordiæ est Maria, in qua omnes inveniunt solatia misericordiæ. Spec. c. 8.

§ Nam sicut misericordiosissimum Dominum, ita misericordiosissimam Dominam habemus. Dominus noster multæ misericordiæ invocantibus se; et Domina nostra multæ misericordiæ invocantibus se.

‖ In te mihi regni sedem constituam, per te preces exaudiam. Communicasti mihi quod homo sum, communicabo tibi quod Deus sum. Serm. 2, de Ass.

peating these words to the divine mother: Turn towards us thy merciful eyes," she saw the Virgin pointing to the eyes of her Son whom she held in her arms, and she said to her: "These are the most merciful eyes that I can turn towards all those who invoke me for their salvation."* A sinner once weeping before the altar of Mary, and imploring her to intercede with God for his pardon, was given to understand that the blessed Virgin turned to the child whom she held in her arms, and said to him: "My son, shall these tears be in vain?"† and he learned that Jesus Christ at once pardoned him.

And how can any one ever perish who recommends himself to this good mother, when the Son, as God, has promised, for love of her, to exercise mercy, as far as it pleases her, towards all those that have recourse to her? Precisely this our Lord revealed to St. Bridget; permitting her to hear these words which he spoke to Mary: "By my omnipotence, venerated mother, I have granted thee the pardon of all sinners, in whatever way it pleases thee, who devoutly invoke the aid of thy mercy."‡ Hence the Abbot Adam Persenius, considering the great compassion that Mary has for all, full of

* Hi sunt misericordiosissimi oculi mei, quos ad omnes me invocantes possum salubriter inclinare. Rev. l. 4, c. 53.

† Fili, et istæ lacrimæ peribunt?

‡ Ex omnipotentia mea, mater reverenda, tibi concessi propitiationem omnium peccatorum, qui devote invocant tuæ pietatis auxilium, qualicunque modo placeat tibi.

confidence says to her: Oh mother of mercy, thy power is as great as thy pity. As thou art powerful to obtain, so thou art merciful to pardon.* And when, he adds, dost thou ever fail to have compassion on sinners, being the mother of mercy; or art thou unable to help them, being mother of omnipotence? Ah, thou canst as readily obtain whatever thou wilt, as thou canst listen to our woes.† Satiate thyself, then, says the Abbot Rupert, satiate thyself, oh great queen, with the glory of thy Son, and through thy compassion, not certainly through our merit, be pleased to send down to us, thy poor servants here below, whatever fragments may remain.‡

If our sins ever throw us into despair, let us say with William of Paris: Oh Lady, do not bring forward my sins against me, for I shall bring forward thy mercy in opposition to them. And let it never be said that my sins can rival, in the judgment, thy mercy, which is more powerful to obtain my pardon, than my sins are to obtain my condemnation.§

* Mater misericordiæ, tanta est pietas tua, quanta potestas; tam pia es ad parcendum, quam potens ad impetrandum.

† Quando non compatieris miseris, mater misericordiæ? Aut quando illi opem conferre non poteris, cum sis mater omnipotentæ? Eadem facilitate obtinens quodcumque vis; qua facilitate nostra innotescit miseria. Ap. P. Pep.

‡ O mater misericordiæ, saturare gloria filii tui, et dimitte reliquias tuas parvulis tuis. In Cant. lib. 5.

§ Ne alligaveris peccata mea contra me, qui misericordiam tuam allego contra ea. Absit, ut stent in judicio peccata mea contra misericordiam tuam, quæ omnibus vitiis fortior est. De Reth Div. c. 18.

EXAMPLE.

We read in the chronicles of the Capuchin Fathers,* that there lived in Venice a celebrated advocate, who, by fraud and evil practices, had become rich. His whole life was very bad, and it appears that he had but one good habit, that of reciting every day a certain prayer to the holy Virgin. Yet, even this little devotion saved him from eternal death, through the mercy of Mary. It happened in this way: Happily for himself, he had a great esteem for Father Matthew da Basso, and urged him so much to come and dine at his house, that one day the Father gave him this pleasure. Having arrived, the advocate said to him: "Now, Father, I will show you something that you have never seen. I have a wonderful ape, who is my valet, washes my glasses, lays the table, and opens the door." "This may not be an ape," answered the Father: "it may be something more than an ape; order him to come here." The ape was called again and again, search was made for him everywhere, and he could not be found. At length, he was discovered hidden under a bed in the lower part of the house, but he would not come out. "Come, then," said the religious, "let us go and see him:" and he went with the advocate to his hiding-place. "Infernal beast," he said, "come forth, and in the name of God I command you

*C. 11, p. 1.

to tell me what you are." And behold, the ape answered that he was the devil, and that he was waiting until that sinner should omit some day to recite his accustomed prayer to the mother of God; for the first time he should omit it, God had given him leave to strangle him, and take him to hell. At these words the advocate cast himself upon his knees to ask help of the servant of God, who encouraged him, and commanded the devil to depart from that house without committing any injury, only he gave him permission, as a sign that he had really gone, to break a piece of the wall. Scarcely had he finished speaking, when, with a great crash, a hole was made in the wall, which, although it was several times closed with stone and mortar, God willed that it should remain open for a long time; until, by the advice of the servant of God, it was filled up with a slab of marble, with an angel carved on it. The advocate was converted, and, it is to be hoped, persevered until death in his new course of life.

PRAYER.

Oh creature, among all others the greatest and most sublime, most holy Virgin, I from this earth salute thee; I, a miserable, unhappy rebel to my God, who deserve punishment and not favors, justice and not mercy. Oh Lady, I do not say this because I distrust thy mercy. I know that thou dost glory in being merciful as thou art

great. I know that thou dost rejoice in being so rich, that thou mayest share thy riches with us sinners. I know that the more wretched are those who seek thee the greater is thy desire to help and save them. Oh my mother, it is thou who once did weep for thy Son when he died for me. Offer, I pray thee, thy tears to God, and with these obtain for me a true sorrow for my sins. So much did sinners grieve thee, then, and so much did I, too, grieve thee by my iniquities. Obtain for me, oh Mary, that I at least from henceforth may no longer continue to afflict thee and thy Son by my ingratitude. What will thy tears avail me if I should continue to be ungrateful to thee? What would thy mercy avail me if I should again be faithless and be lost? No, my queen, do not permit it. Thou hast supplied all my deficiencies; thou canst obtain from God whatever thou wilt; thou graciously hearest every one that prays to thee. These two favors do I ask of thee, and at all events from thee do I hope and desire them: namely, that thou wilt obtain for me to be faithful to God by never more offending him, and to love him as much as I have offended him during the life that remains to me.

CHAPTER VIII.

ET JESUM BENEDICTUM FRUCTUM VENTRIS TUI NOBIS POST HOC EXILIUM OSTENDE.

And after this our exile, show us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

SECTION I.

MARY RESCUES HER SERVANTS FROM HELL.

It is impossible that a servant of Mary who faithfully honors her and recommends himself to her should be lost. This proposition at first sight may appear to some persons extravagant. But I would beg them not to condemn it before reading what will hereafter be said on this point. When it is said that a devoted servant of Mary cannot be lost, those servants are not intended who abuse their devotion by sinning with less fear. Therefore it is unjust to say, as some do who disapprove extolling the mercy of Mary to sinners, that by so doing they are encouraged to sin the more; for such presumptuous persons for their presumption merit punishment and not mercy. It is understood, then only of those of her servants who, with the desire to amend, faithfully honor and commend themselves to the mother of God. That these should be lost is, I say, morally

impossible. And I find Father Crasset has affirmed the same thing in his book upon devotion to Mary;* and before him Vega,† Mendoza,‡ and other theologians. And that we may know that they have not spoken unadvisedly, let us see what the Doctors and Saints have said on this subject. Let no one be surprised if I here quote several sentences, of different authors, containing the same thing; for I have wished to record them all, in order to show how unanimously all writers agree on this point. St. Anselm says, that as he who is not devoted to Mary and protected by her cannot be saved, so it is impossible that he should be condemned who recommends himself to the Virgin, and is regarded by her with affection.§ St. Antoninus asserts the same thing in nearly the same words: As it is impossible that those from whom Mary turns away her eyes of compassion should be saved, so it must be that all those towards whom she turns her eyes, and for whom she intercedes, shall be saved and glorified.‖ This saint adds, then, that the servants of Mary must necessarily be saved.

* Tom. 1. qu. 7.

† Teologia Mariana.

‡ Virid. l. 1, Probl. 9.

§ Virgo benedictissima, sicut impossibile est, ut a te aversus, et a te despectus salvetur, ita ad te conversus et a te respectus impossibile est ut pereat. De Exc. Virg. c. 11.

‖ Sicut impossibile est, ut illi a quibus Maria oculos suæ misericordiæ avertit, salventur; ita necessarium quod hi, ad quos convertit oculos suos, pro eis advocans, salventur et glorificentur. Part 4, tit. 50.

Let us note, however, the first part of the statement of these saints, and let those tremble who little esteem, or abandon, through negligence, devotion to this divine mother. They say that it is impossible for those to be saved who are not protected by Mary. And this is also asserted by others, as the blessed Albertus Magnus: All those who are not thy servants, oh Mary, shall perish: "Gens quæ non servierit tibi peribit."* St. Bonaventure, too: He who neglects the service of Mary shall die in sin.† And in another place: He who has not recourse to thee, oh Lady, will not reach paradise.‡ And on Psalm xcix. the saint goes so far as to say that those from whom Mary turns away her face, not only will not be saved, but can have no hope of salvation.§ And before this St. Ignatius, the martyr, said the same thing, asserting that a sinner cannot be saved except by means of the holy Virgin, who, on the other hand, saves by her merciful intercession many that would be condemned by the divine justice.‖ Some persons doubt whether this passage is from St. Ignatius; at least Father Crasset says that St. John Chrysostom has adopted it

* Bibl. Mar. c. 60.

† Qui neglexerit illam, morietur in peccatis suis. In Psal. cxvi.

‡ Qui te non invocat in hac vita, non perveniet ad regnum Dei. In Psal. lxxxvi.

§ A quibus averteris vultum tuum, non erit spes ad salutem.

‖ Impossibile est aliquem salvari peccatorum, nisi per tuum, O Virgo, auxilium et favorem, quia quos non salvat Dei justitia, salvat sua intercessione Mariæ misericordia infinita. Ap. celada in Jud. Fig. s. 10.

as his own.* It is also repeated by the Abbot of Celles.† And in the same sense the holy Church applies to Mary these words of Proverbs: All that hate me love death: "Omnes qui me oderunt, diligunt mortem."‡ For, as Richard of St. Laurence says, commenting on the words: She is like the merchant's ship:§ all those who are out of this ship shall be submerged in the sea of this world.‖ Even the heretic Œcolampadius esteemed neglect of devotion in any one to the mother of God as a certain sign of reprobation; hence, he said: Let it never be heard of me that I am averse to Mary, to be ill affected towards whom I should think a certain sign of a repr bate mind.¶

On the other hand, Mary says: He that hearkeneth to me shall not be confounded.** He who has recourse to me, and listens to what I say to him, shall not be lost. From which St. Bonaventure said: Oh, Lady, those who are mindful to honor thee, shall be far from perdition.†† Even

* In Deprec. ad Virg.

† In Comp. Virg. c. 5.

‡ Prov. viii. 36.

§ Facta est quasi navis institoris. Prov. xxxi. 14.

‖ In mare mundi submergentur omnes illi, quos non suscipit navis ista. De Laud. V. l. 11.

¶ Nunquam de me audiatur, quasi averser Mariam, erga quam minus bene affici reprobatæ mentis certum existimem judicium. V. Ap. P. Pep. Lez. tom. 7.

** Qui audit me non confundetur. Eccli. xxiv. 30.

†† Qui præstat in obsequio tuo, procul fiet a perditione. In Psal. cxviii.

when, as St. Hilary says, they have hitherto deeply offended God.*

Hence the devil strives so hard with sinners, in order that, having lost divine grace, they may also lose devotion to Mary. Sarah, seeing Isaac playing with Ishmael, who was teaching him evil habits, asked Abraham to send him away, and his mother Agar also: "Cast out this bond-woman and her son."† She was not satisfied that the son alone should leave the house without the mother, fearing lest the son would come to visit his mother, and thus continue to frequent the house. In like manner, the devil is not satisfied with seeing Jesus cast out from a soul, if he does not see the mother also cast out: "Cast out this bond-woman and her son." Otherwise he fears that the mother, by her intercession, may again obtain the return of her son. And he has cause to fear, for as the learned Father Paciucchelli remarks: He who is faithful in honoring the mother of God, through Mary, will soon receive him.‡ Therefore rightly was the devotion to our Lady called by St. Ephrem: The passport of escape from hell: "Charta libertatis."§ The divine mother was also named by him: The protectress of the condemned: "Patrocinatrix damnatorum." And with truth St. Bernard says, that

* Quantumcumque quis fuerit peccator, si Mariæ devotus extiterit, nunquam in æternum peribit. Cant. 12, in Matt.

† Ejice ancillam hanc, et filium ejus. Gen. xxi. 10.

‡ Qui Dei genitrici perseveranter obsequitur, non multa mora et Deum ipsum in se recipiet. In Salv. Reg. Ex. 5.

§ Or: de Laud. V.

Mary is neither wanting in the power nor the will to save us.* Not in the power, because it is impossible that her prayers should not be heard, as St Antoninus asserts;† and St. Bonaventure says also, that her requests cannot be unavailing, but obtain for her what she wishes: Quod quærit invenit et frustrari non potest.‡ Not in the will to save us, for Mary is our mother, and desires our salvation more than we desire it ourselves. If this is then true, how can it ever happen that a servant of Mary should be lost? He may be a sinner, but if, with perseverance and a desire for amendment, he commends himself to this good mother, she will take care to obtain for him light to guide him out of his bad state, contrition for his sins, perseverance in goodness, and finally a good death. And is there any mother who would not rescue her child from death, if she could do it by praying his judge for mercy? And can we belive that Mary, the most loving mother possible to her servants, would fail to rescue one of them from eternal death, when she can do it so easily?

Ah, devout reader, let us thank the Lord if we find that he has given us the love of the queen of heaven, and confidence in her; for God, as St. John Damascene says, does not grant this grace except to those whom he wishes to save. These

* Nec facultas, nec voluntas illi deesse potest. Serm. de Aff.
† Impossibile est Deiparam non exaudiri. P. 4, tit. 15, c. 17. v. 4.
‡ Serm. de Aquæd.

the beautiful words of the saint, with which he would quicken his own and our hope: Oh mother of God, if I place my confidence in thee I shall be saved. If I am under thy protection, I have nothing to fear, because to be thy servant is to have certain arms of salvation, which God only grants to those whom he will save.* Hence Erasmus thus salutes the Virgin: Hail, terror of hell! hail, hope of Christians! confidence in thee secures salvation.†

Oh, how much it grieves the devil to see a soul persevering in its devotion to the divine mother! We read in the life of Father Alphonsus Alverez, who had a special devotion to Mary, that being in prayer, and finding himself tormented by impure temptations with which the devil afflicted him, the enemy said to him: Quit thy devotion to Mary, and I will cease to tempt thee.

The Lord revealed to St. Catherine of Sienna, as we read in Blosius, that he, in his goodness, had granted to Mary, from love to his only begotten Son, whose mother she is, that not even one sinner, who commends himself devoutly to her, should be the prey of hell.‡ The Prophet David, too, prayed to be rescued from hell, for the honor in which he held Mary: "I have loved, oh Lord, the beauty of thy house; take not away

* Serm. de Nat. B. V.

† Salve, inferorum formido, Christianorum spes, certa est fiducia tua. Orat. ad Virg.

‡ Mariæ filii mei genitrici a bonitate mea concessum est propter Incarnati Verbi reverentiam, ut quicumque etiam peccator ad eam cum devota veneratione recurrit, nullo modo rapiatur de dæmone infernali. In Man. Spir.

my soul with the wicked."* He says of thy house, "Domus tuæ," because Mary was, indeed, that house of God, which he himself, when he became man, built on this earth for his habitation, and for the place of his rest, as we read in Proverbs: Wisdom hath built herself a house.† No, he surely will not be lost, says St. Ignatius, the martyr, who is constant in his devotion to this virgin mother.‡ And this is confirmed by St. Bonaventure, who says: Oh Lady, those who love thee enjoy great peace in this life, and in the other they shall not see eternal death.§ No, for it never did, and never will happen, as the devout Blosius assures us, that an humble and constant servant of Mary will be lost.‖

Oh, how many would have been eternally condemned, or remained in obstinacy, if Mary had not interceded with her Son to exercise mercy! Thus says Thomas à Kempis.¶ And it is the opinion of many doctors, especially of St. Thomas, that the divine mother has obtained from God a reprieve for many persons who had even died in mortal sin, and their return to

* Domine, dilexi decorem domus tuæ, ne perdas cum impiis animam meam. Psal. xxv. 8, 9.

† Sapientia ædificavit sibi domum. Prov. ix. 1.

‡ Nunquam peribit qui genitrici Virgini devotus sedulusque extiterit.

§ Pax multa diligentibus te, Domina; anima eorum non videbit mortem in æternum. In Psal. cxviii.

‖ Fieri non potest ut pereat qui Mariæ sedulus et umilis cultor extiterit. In Cant. v. Spir. c. 18.

¶ Quanti fuissent, æternaliter condemnati, vel permansissent in desperatione obstinati, nisi beatissima Virgo Maria interpellasset ad filium. Ap. Pep. Lez. tom. 7.

life to do penance. We have many examples of this given by writers of good authority. Among others, Flodoard, who lived about the ninth century, narrates, in his chronicles,* that one Adelman, a deacon, who appeared to be dead, was about to be buried, when he returned to life, and said, that he had seen the place in hell to which he had already been condemned, but that, through the intercession of the blessed Virgin, he had been sent back to earth to do penance. Surius also relates, that a Roman citizen, named Andrew, had died without doing penance, and that Mary had obtained his return to life that he might procure pardon.† Pelbart, moreover, relates, that in his time, when the Emperor Sigismund was crossing the Alps with his army, a voice was heard, proceeding from a dead body, of which only the bones remained, asking for confession, and saying, that the mother of God, to whom he had been devoted whilst he was a soldier, had obtained for him that he should live in those bones until he had made his confession. Having confessed, he died.‡ These and similar examples must not serve as encouragement for some rash person who would live in sin, in the hope that Mary would free him from hell, even if he should die in sin; for as it would be a great folly to throw one's self into a well, in the

* Ap. Crass. to. 1, q. 12.
† L. 1, c. 35.
‡ Stellar. Cor. B. V. l. 12, p. 2, a. 1.

hope that Mary would save us from death, because the Virgin has rescued some persons under similar circumstances; thus a greater folly would it be for one to run the risk of dying in sin, on the presumption that the holy Virgin would rescue him from hell. But these examples should serve to strengthen our confidence by the consideration, that if the intercession of this divine mother could deliver those from hell—even those who have died in sin—how much more will it prevent those from falling into hell who in life have recourse to her with the intention to amend and serve her faithfully?

Then, oh our mother, let us say with St. Germanus: What will become of us who are sinners, but who wish to amend and have recourse to thee, who art the life of Christians?* Let us, oh Lady, hear what St. Anselm says of thee, that he will not be lost for whom thou hast once offered thy prayers.† Pray, then, for us, and we shall be saved from hell. Who will tell me, says Richard of Victor, that when I am presented at the divine tribunal, the Judge will not be favorable to me, if I shall have thee to defend my cause, oh mother of mercy?‡ And the blessed Henry Suso declared, that he had placed his soul in the care of Mary, and he said, that if the Judge wished to condemn him, he would have the sentence

* Quid autem de nobis fiet, O sanctissima Virgo, O vita Christianorum. De Zona Virg.

† Æternum væ non sentiet ille pro quo semel oraverit Maria.

‡ Si accedam ad judicium, et matrem misericordiæ in causa mea habeo mecum, quis judicium denegabit propitium? In C. c. 15.

pass through the hands of Mary.* For he hoped that when the sentence of condemnation should fall into the kind hands of the Virgin, its execution would certainly be prevented. I ask and hope the same for myself, oh my most holy queen. Whence I will always repeat with St. Bonaventure: Oh Lady, in thee I have placed all my hopes, therefore I securely hope not to be lost, but safe in heaven to praise and love thee forever.†

EXAMPLE.

In the year 1604 there lived in a city of Flanders two young students, who, instead of attending to their studies, gave themselves up to excesses and dissipation. One night, having gone to the house of a woman of ill fame, one of them, named Richard, after some time returned home, but the other remained. Richard having gone home was undressing to go to rest, when he remembered that he had not recited that day, as usual, some "Hail Marys." He was oppressed with sleep and very weary, yet he roused himself and recited them, although without devotion, and only half awake. He then went to bed, and having just fallen asleep, he heard a loud knocking at the door, and immediately after, before he had time to open it, he saw before him his companion, with a hideous and ghastly appearance. "Who are you?" he said to him. "Do you not

* Si judex servum suum damnare voluerit, per manus tuas piissimas, O Maria, hoc faciat. Hor. Sap. l. 1, c. 16.

† In te, Domina, speravi, non confundar in æternum. In Psal. Mar.

know me?" answered the other. "But what has so changed you? you seem like a demon." "Alas!" exclaimed this poor wretch, "I am damned." "And how is this?" "Know," he said, "that when I came out of that infamous house, a devil attacked me and strangled me. My body lies in the middle of the street, and my soul is in hell. Know that my punishment would also have been yours, but the blessed Virgin, on account of those few 'Hail Marys' said in her honor, has saved you. Happy will it be for you, if you know how to avail yourself of this warning, that the mother of God sends you through me." After these words he opened his cloak, showed the fire and serpents that were consuming him, and then disappeared. Then the youth, bursting into a flood of tears, threw himself with his face on the ground, to thank Mary, his deliverer, and while he was revolving in his mind a change of life, he hears the matin bell of a neighboring Franciscan Monastery. "It is there," he exclaimed, "that God calls me to do penance." He went immediately to the convent to beg the fathers to receive him. Knowing how bad his life had been, they objected. But after he had related the circumstance which had brought him there, weeping bitterly all the while, two of the fathers went out to search in the street, and actually found there the dead body of his companion, having the marks of strangulation, and black as a coal. Whereupon the young man was received. Richard from that time led an exem-

plary life. He went into India to preach the faith; from thence passed to Japan, and finally had the good fortune and received the grace of dying a martyr for Jesus Christ, by being burned alive.*

PRAYER.

Oh Mary! oh my most dear mother! in what an abyss of evil I should find myself, if thou, with thy kind hand, hadst not so often preserved me! Yea, how many years should I already have been in hell, if thou, with thy powerful prayers, hadst not rescued me! My grievous sins were hurrying me there; divine justice had already condemned me; the raging demons were waiting to execute the sentence; but thou didst appear, oh mother, not invoked nor asked by me, and hast saved me. Oh my dear deliverer, what return can I make thee for so much grace and so much love? Thou hast overcome the hardness of my heart, and hast drawn me to love thee and confide in thee. And oh, into what an abyss of evils I afterwards should have fallen, if thou, with thy kind hand, hadst not so many times protected me from the dangers into which I was on the brink of falling! Continue, oh my hope, continue to save me from hell, but first of all from the sins into which I might again fall. Do not permit that I shall have to curse thee in hell. My beloved Lady, I love thee, and how can thy goodness endure to see one of thy ser-

* P. Alf. Andrada de Bapt. Virg.

vants who loves thee, lost? Ah, obtain for me the grace to be no longer ungrateful to thee and to my God, who for love of thee hath granted me so many favors. Oh Mary, what dost thou say to me? Shall I be lost? I shall be lost if I leave thee. But who will any more venture to forsake thee? Shall I ever forget thy love for me? Thou, after God, art the love of my soul. I dare live no longer without loving thee. I bless thee! I love thee! and I hope that I shall always love thee in time and in eternity, oh creature most beautiful! most holy! most sweet! most amiable of all creatures in this world! Amen.

SECTION II.

MARY ASSISTS HER SERVANTS IN PURGATORY.

Too happy are the servants of this most kind mother, since not only in this world they are aided by her, but also in purgatory they are assisted and consoled by her protection. For succor being there more needed, because they are in torment and cannot help themselves, so much the more does this mother of mercy strive to help them. St. Bernardine of Sienna says, that in that prison of souls who are spouses of Jesus Christ, Mary has a certain dominion and plenitude of power to relieve them, as well as deliver them from their pains.*

* Beata Virgo in regno purgatorii dominium habet. Serm. 3, de Nom. Mar. a 1, c. 3.

And, in the first place, as to relieving them, the same saint, applying the words of Ecclesiasticus: I have walked in the waves of the sea: "In fluctibus maris ambulavi," * adds, visiting and relieving the necessities and sufferings of my servants, who are my children.† St. Bernardine says, that the pains of purgatory are called waves, because they are transitory, unlike the pains of hell, which never end: and they are called waves of the sea, because they are very bitter pains. The servants of Mary tormented by those pains are often visited and succored by her. See, then, how important it is, says Novarino, to be a servant of this good Lady; for she never forgets such when they are suffering in those flames. And although Mary succors all the souls in purgatory, yet she always obtains more indulgences and alleviations for those who have been especially devoted to her.‡

This divine mother, in her revelations to St. Bridget, said: "I am the mother of all the souls in purgatory; and all the sufferings which they merit for the sins committed in life are every hour, while they remain there, alleviated in some measure by my prayers." § This kind mother

* Cap. xxiv. v. 8.

† Scilicet visitans et subveniens necessitatibus et tormentis devotorum meorum quia filii sunt. Serm. 8, de Nom. Mar. a. 1, c. 8.

‡ Vide quam referat Virginem colere, cum cultorum suorum in purgatorii flammis existentium non obliviscatur. Et licet omnibus opem et refrigerium ferat, id tamen præcipue erga suos præstat. Nov. Virg. Umb. c. 15, exc. 86.

§ Ego mater omnium qui sunt in purgatorio, quia omnes pœnæ, quæ debentur illis pro peccatis suis, in qualibet hora propter preces meas quodammodo mitigantur. L. 4. Rev. c. 132.

sometimes condescends even to enter into that holy prison, to visit and console these her afflicted children. I have penetrated into the bottom of the deep: "Profundum abyssi penetravi," as we read in Ecclesiasticus;* and St. Bonaventure, applying these words, adds: I have penetrated the depth of this abyss, that is, of purgatory, to relieve by my presence those holy souls.† Oh, how kind and beneficent is the holy Virgin to those who are suffering in purgatory! says St. Vincent Ferrer; through her they receive continual consolation and refreshment.‡

And what other consolation have they in their sufferings than Mary, and the help of this mother of mercy? St. Bridget one day heard Jesus saying to his mother: "Thou art my mother, thou art the mother of mercy, thou art the consoler of those who are in purgatory."§ And the blessed Virgin herself said to St. Bridget, that as a poor sick person, suffering and deserted on his bed, feels himself refreshed by some word of consolation, so those souls feel themselves consoled in hearing only her name.‖ The name alone of Mary, a name of hope and salva-

* Cap. xxiv. 8.

† Abyssi, idest purgatorii, adjuvans illas sanctas animas.

‡ Maria bona, existentibus in purgatorio; quia per eam habent suffragium. Ser. 2, de Nat.

§ Tu es mater mea, tu mater misericordiæ, tu consolatio eorum, qui sunt in purgatorio. Lib. 1, Rev. 19.

‖ Qui sunt in purgatorio gaudent, nomine meo audito, quemadmodum æger jacens in lecto, cum audit verbum solatii. Ap. B. Dion. Cant. l. 3, de Laud. V.

tion, which these beloved children often invoke in that prison, is for them a great comfort. But, then, says Novarino, the loving mother, on hearing herself invoked by them, adds her prayers to God, by which these souls receive comfort, and find their burning pains cooled as if by dew from heaven.*

But not only does Mary console and succor her servants in purgatory; she also releases them from this prison, and delivers them by her intercession. From the day of her glorious assumption, in which that prison is said to have been emptied,† as Gerson writes; and Novarino confirms this by saying, that many weighty authors relate that Mary, when about to ascend to paradise, asked this favor of her Son, that she might take with her all the souls that were then in purgatory;‡ from that time, says Gerson, the blessed Virgin has possessed the privilege of freeing her servants from those pains. And this also is positively asserted by St. Bernardine, who says that the blessed Virgin has the power of delivering souls from purgatory by her prayers and the application of her merits, especially if they have been devoted to her.§

* Virginis nomen illarum pœnarum refrigerium est; addit Virgo preces quibus veluti supero quodam rore cruciatus illi magni mitigantur. Nov. cit. c. 15, exc. 86.

† Totum purgatorium fuisse evacuatum.

‡ Ferunt quippe bonæ notæ auctores, Virginem in cœlum ituram a filio hoc petiisse, ut omnes animas quæ detinebantur in purgatorio, secum ad gloriam ducere posset. Cit. Exc. 86.

§ Ab his tormentis liberat beata Virgo, maxime devotos suos. Serm. 3. de Nom. Mar. a. 2, c. 3.

And Novarino says the same thing, believing that by the merits of Mary, not only the torments of these souls are assuaged, but also abridged, the time of their purgation being shortened by her intercession:* and for this it is enough that she presents herself to pray for them.

St. Peter Damian relates,† that a certain lady, named Marozia, after death, appeared to her godmother, and told her that on the day of the Assumption of Mary she had been released by her from purgatory, with a multitude of souls exceeding in number the whole population of Rome. St. Denis the Carthusian relates, that on the festivals of the birth and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Mary descends into purgatory, accompanied by troops of angels, and releases many souls from their torments.‡ And Novarino believes that the same thing happens on every solemn festival of the holy Virgin.§

Every one has heard of the promise made by Mary to Pope John, to whom she appeared, and

* Crediderim omnibus qui in flammis purgantur, Mariæ meritis non solum leviores fuisse redditas illas pœnas, sed et breviores; adeo ut cruciatuum tempus contractum Virginis ope illius sit. Cit. Exc. 86.

† Lib. 3, Ep. 10 et in ord. 50.

‡ Beatissima Virgo singulis in annis festivitate nativitatis Christi ad purgatorii loca cum multitudine angelorum descendit, et multas inde animas cripit. Etiam in nocte dominicæ resurrectionis solet descendere ad purgatorium pro eductione animarum. Cart. Serm. 2, de Aff.

§ Facile autem crediderim in quocumque Virginis solemni festo plures animas ab illis pœnis eximi. In loc. cit.

ordered him to make known to all those who should wear the sacred scapular of Carmel, that on the Saturday after their death they should be released from purgatory. And this was proclaimed by the same pontiff, as Father Crasset relates,* in a bull which he published. It was also confirmed by Alexander V., Clement VII., Pius V., Gregory XIII., and Paul V., who, in 1612, in a bull said: "That Christians may piously believe that the blessed Virgin will aid by her continual intercession, by her merits and special protection, after death, and principally on Saturday, which is a day consecrated by the Church to the blessed Virgin, the souls of the members of the confraternity of holy Mary of Mount Carmel, who shall have departed this life in the state of grace, worn the scapular, observing chastity according to their state of life, recited the office of the Virgin, and if they have not been able to recite it, shall have observed the fasts of the Church, abstaining from flesh-meat on Wednesdays, except on Christmas-day." And in the solemn office of the feast of holy Mary of Mount Carmel, we read that it is piously believed, that the holy Virgin, with a mother's love consoles the members of the confraternity of Mount Carmel in purgatory, and by her intercession conducts them to their heavenly country.†

* Tom. 2, Div. d. B. Virg. tr. 6, prat. 4.

† Materno plane affectu, dum igne purgatorii expiantur, solari, ac in cœlestem patriam obtentu suo quantocius pie creditur afferre. In Festo S. Mar. de M. Carm. 16, Jul.

Why should we not also hope for the same graces and favors, if we are devoted to this good mother? And if with more special love we serve her, why cannot we hope to obtain the grace of going immediately after death to paradise, without entering into purgatory? as we read that the holy Virgin said to the blessed Godfrey, through brother Abondo, in these words: "Go and tell brother Godfrey to advance in virtue, for thus he will be a child of my Son, and mine also; and when his soul quits the body, I will not permit it to go to purgatory, but I will take it and present it to my Son."* And if we would assist the holy souls in purgatory, let us endeavor to remember them in all our prayers to the blessed Virgin, applying to them especially the holy rosary, which procures for them great relief, as we read in the following example.

EXAMPLE.

Father Eusebius Nierembergh relates,† that there lived in the city of Aragona a girl, named Alexandra who, being noble and very beautiful, was greatly loved by two young men. Through jealousy, they one day fought and killed each other. Their enraged relatives, in return, killed the poor young girl, as the cause of so much trouble, cut off her head, and threw her into a well. A few days after, St. Dominic was passing through that place, and, inspired by the

* In lib. de Gest. Vir. ill. Sol. Villar.
† Troph. Marian. l. 4, c. 29.

Lord, approached the well, and said: "Alexandra, come forth," and immediately the head of the deceased came forth, placed itself on the edge of the well, and prayed St. Dominic to hear its confession. The saint heard its confession, and also gave it communion, in presence of a great concourse of persons who had assembled to to witness the miracle. Then, St. Dominic ordered her to speak and tell why she had received that grace. Alexandra answered, that when she was beheaded, she was in a state of mortal sin, but that the most holy Mary, on account of the rosary, which she was in the habit of reciting, had preserved her in life. Two days the head retained its life upon the edge of the well, in the presence of all, and then the soul went to purgatory. But fifteen days after, the soul of Alexandra appeared to St. Dominic, beautiful and radiant as a star, and told him, that one of the principal sources of relief to the souls in purgatory is the rosary which is recited for them; and that, as soon as they arrive in paradise, they pray for those who apply to them these powerful prayers. Having said this, St. Dominic saw that happy soul ascending in triumph to the kingdom of the blessed.

PRAYER.

Oh Queen of heaven and of earth, oh mother of the Lord of the world, oh Mary, creature most great, most exalted, most amiable, it is true that many on the earth do not love thee and do not

know thee; but there are innumerable angels and saints in heaven who love and praise thee continually. On this earth, too, how many souls burn with love of thee, and live enamored of thy goodness! Ah, if I, too, might love thee, my most lovely Lady! Oh, that I might always be engaged in serving thee, in praising thee, in honoring thee, and in striving to awaken love of thee in others. A God hath been enamored of thee, who, by thy beauty, if I may so speak, hast drawn him from the bosom of the eternal Father, to come upon the earth and become man and thy Son; and I, a miserable worm, shall I not be enamored of thee? Yes, my most sweet mother, I also will love thee, love thee much, and do all in my power to make thee loved by others. Accept, then, oh Mary, the desire I have to love thee, and help me to fulfil it: I know that thy lovers are regarded with much favor by thy God. Next to his own glory, he desires nothing more than thy glory, in seeing thee honored and loved by all. From thee, oh Lady, I await all my blessings. Thou must obtain the pardon of all my sins, thou must obtain for me perseverance, succor in death, deliverance from purgatory, in a word, thou must conduct me to paradise. All this thy lovers hope from thee, and they are not deceived. This I also hope, who love thee with all my heart, and above all things next to God.

SECTION III.

MARY CONDUCTS HER SERVANTS TO PARADISE.

Oh, what a signal mark of predestination have the servants of Mary! The holy Church applies to this divine mother the words of Ecclesiasticus, and makes her say for the comfort of her servants: "In all these I sought rest, and I shall abide in the inheritance of the Lord."* Cardinal Hugo, commenting on this, remarks: Blessed is he in whose habitation the holy Virgin found rest: "Beatus in cujus domo beatæ Virgo requiem invenerit." Mary, through the love she bears to all, seeks to make devotion to her prevail in all hearts. Many do not receive it or do not preserve it; blessed is he who receives it and preserves it. In the inheritance of the Lord will I abide; that is, adds the learned Paciucchelli, in those who are the inheritance of the Lord.† Devotion to the Virgin abides in all those who are the inheritance of the Lord, that is, who will be in heaven praising him eternally. Mary continues in the passage above cited: "He that made me, rested in my tabernacle, and he said to me: Let thy dwelling be in Jacob, and thy inheritance in Israel, and take root in my elect."‡ My Creator has condescended to

* In omnibus requiem quæsivi, et in hereditate Domini morabor. Cap. xxiv. 11.

† Et in hæreditate Domini morabor, idest in illis qui sunt hæreditas Domini.

‡ Qui creavit me, requievit in tabernaculo meo; et dixit mihi, in

come and rest in my bosom, and has willed that I should inhabit in the hearts of all the elect, whom Jacob prefigured, and who are the inheritance of the Virgin; and he has ordained that devotion to me and confidence in me should take root in the hearts of the elect.

Oh, how many would have failed of being among the blessed in heaven, if Mary, by her powerful intercession, had not conducted them thither! "I made that in the heavens there should rise light that never faileth;"* thus Cardinal Hugo puts into her mouth these words of the same chapter of Ecclesiasticus: I have made to shine in heaven as many eternal lights as I have devoted servants. Whence the same author adds, commenting on this text: Many saints are in heaven by her intercession, who never would have been there without it.† St Bonaventure says, that the gate of heaven will be opened to receive all those who trust in the protection of Mary.‡ Hence St. Ephrem called devotion to the divine mother the opening of paradise.§ And the devout Blosius, addressing the Virgin, says to her: Lady, to thee are committed the keys and the treasure of the heavenly kingdom.

Jacob inhabita, et in Israel hæreditare, et in electis meis mitte radices.

* Ego feci in cœlis, ut oriretur lumen indeficiens. Cap. xxiv. v. 6.

† Multi sancti sunt in cœlis, intercessione ejus, qui nunquam, ibi fuissent nisi per eam.

‡ Qui speraverit in illa, porta cœli reserabitur ei.

§ Reseramentum cœlestis Jerusalem. Orat. de Laud. Virg.

And, therefore, we should continually supplicate her in the words of St. Ambrose: Open to us, oh Virgin, heaven, for thou hast the keys of it.† Nay, thou art even the gate of it, as the holy Church names thee, "Janua cœli."

For this reason the great mother is also called by the holy Church: Star of the sea: "Ave, Maris stella." For as navigators, says the angelic St. Thomas, are guided to port by means of a star, thus Christians are guided to heaven by means of Mary.‡

She is for this reason, finally, called by St. Peter Damian, the ladder of heaven: "Scala cœlestis;" for, as the saint says, by means of Mary, God has descended from heaven to earth, that by the same, or by her, men might merit to ascend from earth to heaven.§ And for this reason, oh Lady, says St. Anastasius, thou art full of grace, that thou mightest be made the way of our salvation, and the ascent to the celestial country.‖ St. Bernard calls the blessed Virgin: The vehicle to heaven: "Vehiculum ad cœlum." And St. John the Geometrician

* Tibi regni cœlestis claves thesaurique commissi sunt. Cimel. Endol. 1.

† Aperi nobis, O Virgo, cœlum, cujus claves habes.

‡ Dicitur stella maris, quia sicut navigantes ad portum diriguntur per stellam maris, ita Christiani diriguntur ad gloriam per Mariam. Opusc. 8.

§ Scala cœlestis, quia per ipsam Deus descendit ad terram, ut per ipsam homines mererentur ascendere ad cœlum.

‖ Ave gratia plena, quod facta sis salutis via, ascensusque ad superos. Serm. 1, de Annunc.

salutes her: Hail, most noble chariot: "Salve clarissime currus;" by which her servants are conducted to heaven. And, St Bonaventure addresses her thus: Blessed are those who know thee, oh mother of God! for to know thee is the path to immortal life, and to publish thy virtues is the way to eternal salvation.*

In the Franciscan chronicles† it is related of brother Leo, that he once saw a red ladder, upon which Jesus Christ was standing, and a white one, upon which stood his holy mother. He saw persons attempting to ascend the red ladder; they ascended a few steps and then fell; they ascended again, and again fell. Then they were exhorted to ascend the white ladder, and on that he saw them succeed, for the blessed Virgin offered them her hand, and they arrived in that manner safe in paradise. St. Denis the Carthusian asks: Who will ever be saved? Who will ever reign in heaven? They are saved, and will certainly reign, he himself answers, for whom this queen of mercy offers her prayers.‡ And this Mary herself affirms: By me kings reign: "Per me reges regnant."§ Through my intercession souls reign first in the mortal life on this earth, by governing their passions, and then they go to reign eternally in heaven, where, as St.

* Scire et cognoscere te, O Virgo Deipara, est via immortalitatis; et narrare virtutes tuas est via salutis. In Psal. lxxxv.

† P. 1, t. 1, c. 35.

‡ Quis salvatur? quis regnat in cœlo? illi sunt, pro quibus regina misericordiæ interpellat.

§ Prov. viii. 15.

Augustine declares, all are kings: "Quot cives, tot reges." Mary, in a word, as Richard of St. Laurence says, is the mistress of paradise, since there she commands according to her pleasure, and introduces into it whom she will. Therefore, applying to her the words of Ecclesiasticus, he adds: "My power is in Jerusalem:"* I command what I will, and introduce whom I will.† And as she is the mother of the Lord of paradise, she is with reason, also, says Rupert, the Lady of paradise. She possesses, by right, the whole kingdom of her Son.‡

This divine mother, with her powerful prayers and assistance, has obtained for us paradise, if we place no obstacle to our entrance there.§ Wherefore those who are servants of Mary, and for whom Mary intercedes, are as secure of paradise as if they were already there.‖ To serve Mary and to belong to her court, adds St. John of Damascus, is the greatest honor we can attain; for to serve the queen of heaven is to reign already in heaven, and to live in obedience to her commands is more than to reign.¶ On the

* In Jerusalem potestas mea. C. 24, 25.

† Imperando scilicet quod volo, et quos volo, introducendo. Rico. l. 4, de. L. V.

‡ Totum jure possidet filii regnum. L. 3, in Cant. 4.

§ Cœleste nobis regnum suo interventu, auxiliis, et precibus impetravit. St. Antoninus, p. 4, tit. 15, c. 2, s. 1.

‖ Qui Virgini famulatur, ita securus est de paradiso ac si esset in paradiso. Guerricus Abbas.

¶ Summus honor servire Mariæ, et de ejus esse familia. Etenim ei servire regnare est, est ejus agi frœnis plusquam regnum. De Exc. Virg. c. 9.

other hand, he says that those who do not serve Mary will not be saved; whilst those who are deprived of the support of this great mother, are deprived of the succor of the Son, and of all the celestial court.*

Forever praised be the infinite goodness of our God who has constituted Mary our advocate in heaven, that she, as mother of the judge and mother of mercy may efficaciously by her intercession, order the great affair of our eternal salvation. This sentiment is taken from St. Bernard.† And James the Monk, esteemed a doctor among the Greek fathers, says that God has made Mary a bridge of salvation, by which we are enabled to pass over the waves of this world, and reach the blessed port of paradise.‡ Hence St. Bonaventure exclaims: Hear, oh ye people who desire paradise; serve and honor Mary, and you will certainly find life eternal.§

Not even those who deserve hell should despair of attaining the kingdom of the blessed, if they faithfully devote themselves to the service of this queen. Sinners, says St. Germanus,

* Gens quæ non servierit illi, peribit. Gentes destitutæ tantæ matris auxilio, destituuntur auxilio Filii, et totius curiæ cœlestis. Exc. Virg. c. 9.

† Advocatam promisit peregrinatio nostra, quæ tanquam judicis mater, et mater misericordiæ, suppliciter et efficaciter salutis nostræ negotia pertractabit. Serm. 1, de Assump.

‡ Eam tu pontem fecisti, quo a mundi fluctibus trajiciens, ad tranquillum portum tuum deveniamus. Orat. in Nat. Deip.

§ Audite, gentes, qui cupitis regnum Dei, Virginem Mariam honorate et invenietis vitam æternam. In Psalt. Vir.

have sought to find God by thy means, oh Mary, and have been saved!* Richard of St. Laurence remarks that Mary is said by St. John to be crowned with stars.† On the other hand, in the sacred Canticles, the Virgin is said to be crowned with wild beasts, lions and panthers: "Come from Libanus, my spouse, come from Libanus, come; thou shalt be crowned from the dens of the lions, from the mountains of the leopards."‡ What does this signify? Richard answers that those wild beasts are those sinners, who, through the favor and intercession of Mary, have become stars of paradise, which are a crown more worthy of this queen of mercy, than all the material stars of heaven.§ The servant of the Lord, sister Seraphina da Capri, as we read in her life, in her prayes to the most holy Virgin during the Novena of her assumption, asked of her the conversion of a thousand sinners; but as she feared that her demands were too extravagant, the Virgin appeared to her, and reproved her for this her vain fear, saying to her: "Why do you fear? am I not powerful enough to obtain for thee from my Son the salvation of a thousand sinners? Behold them, I have already obtained it." She

* Peccatores per te, Deum exquisierunt et salvi facti sunt. Serm. de Dorm. Deip.

† Et in capite ejus corona stellarum duodecim. Apoc. xii. 1.

‡ Veni de Libano, sponsa mea, veni de Libano, veni coronaberis de cubilibus leonum, de montibus pardorum. Cant. iv. 8.

§ Et quid est hoc? nisi quia feræ per gratiam et orationes Mariæ sunt stellæ, quæ conveniunt tantæ reginæ. De Laud. Virg. cap. 8.

showed her the soul of innumerable sinners who had merited hell, and had afterwards been saved by her intercession, and were already enjoying eternal bliss.

It is true that in this life no one can be certain of his eternal salvation: "Man knoweth not whether he be worthy of love or hatred, but all things are kept uncertain for the time to come."* David asked of God: Oh Lord, who will be saved? "Who shall dwell in thy tabernacle?"† St. Bonaventure, writing on these words, answers: Oh sinners, let us follow the footsteps of Mary, and cast ourselves at her blessed feet, and let us not leave her until she blesses us, for her blessing will secure to us paradise.‡ It is enough, oh Lady, says St. Anselm, that thou dost wish to save us, for then we cannot but be saved.§ St. Antoninus adds, that souls protected by Mary are necessarily saved; those upon whom she turns her eyes are necessarily justified and glorified.‖

With reason, says St. Ildephonsus, the most holy Virgin predicted that all generations would call her blessed;¶ for all the elect by means of

* Nescit homo utrum odio vel amore dignus sit, sed omnia in futurum servantur incerta. Eccli. ix. 1, 2.

† Domine quis habitabit in tabernaculo tuo? Psal. xiv. 1.

‡ Amplectamur Mariæ vestigia, peccatores, et ejus beatis pedibus pervolvamur. Teneamus eam fortiter, nec dimittamus, donec ab ea mereamur benedici.

§ Tantummodo velis salutem nostram, et vere nequaquam salvi esse non poterimus. De Exc. Virg. c. 11.

‖ Necessarium est quod hi ad quos convertit (Maria) oculos suos, justificentur, et glorificentur. P. 4, tit. 55.

¶ Beatam me dicent omnes generationes. Luc. i. 48.

Mary obtain eternal blessedness.* Thou, oh great mother, art the beginning, the middle, and the end of our felicity, says St. Methodius.† The beginning, because Mary obtains for us the pardon of our sins; the middle, because she obtains for us perseverance in divine grace; the end, because she finally obtains for us paradise. By thee, St. Bernard continues, heaven has been opened—by thee hell has been emptied —by thee paradise has been restored—by thee, in a word, eternal life has been given to many sinners who have merited eternal death.‡

But above all, we should be encouraged in the certain hope of paradise, by the rich promise which Mary has herself made to those who honor her, and especially to those who, by their words and their example, strive to make her known and honored among others: "They that work by me shall not sin; they that explain me shall have life everlasting."§ Oh happy, then, are they, says St. Bonaventure, who gain the favor of Mary! they will be welcomed by the blessed as being already their companions; and whosoever bears the seal of a servant

* Beata jure dicitur, quia omnes ex ea beatificantur. Serm. 3, de Aff.

† Tu felicitatis nostræ principium, medium et finis. Serm. in Hypant.

‡ Per te cœlum apertum est, infernus evacuatus, instaurata cœlestis Jerusalem, miseris damnationem expectantibus vita data est. Serm. 4, de Aff. Virg.

§ Qui operabunt in me, non peccabunt. Qui elucidant me, vitam æternam habebunt. Eccli. xxiv. 30, 31.

of Mary, has his name already written in the book of life.* Of what avail is it, then, to trouble ourselves with the opinions of the schoolmen, on the question, whether predestination to glory precedes or follows the foreknowledge of merits? Whether or not our names are written in the book of life? If we are true servants of Mary and obtain her protection, we certainly are written there; for, as St. John of Damascus says, God gives the grace of devotion to his holy mother only to those whom he will save; in conformity with this, as the Lord seems to have declared expressly through St. John: "He that shall overcome, I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God." † And who is this city of God but Mary? as St. Gregory explains, commenting on this passage of David: "Glorious things are said of thee, oh city of God."‡

We may, then, well say with St. Paul: "Having this seal, the Lord knoweth who are his." § Whosoever carries the seal of a servant of Mary, is acknowledged by God as his own. We read in St. Bernard, that devotion to the mother of God is the most certain sign that we shall obtain

* Qui acquirunt gratiam Mariæ, agnoscentur a civibus paradisi et qui habuerit caracterem ejus, adnotabitur in libro vitæ. In Spec.

† Qui vicerit . . . . scribam super eum nomen Dei mei, et nomen civitatis Dei mei. Apoc. iii. 12.

‡ Gloriosa dicta sunt de te, civitas Dei. Psal. lxxxvi. 3.

§ Habens signaculum hoc, cognovit Dominus qui sunt ejus. Tim. ii. 19.

eternal salvation.* And the blessed Alanus, speaking of the "Hail Mary," says that he who often invokes the Virgin with this angelical salutation, has a very certain sign of predestination.† And again he says of perseverance in the daily recitation of the holy rosary: Let it be to thee a most probable sign of eternal salvation, if thou dost perseveringly honor the blessed Virgin by daily reciting her rosary.‡ Father Nierembergh still further remarks, that the servants of the mother of God not only are more privileged and favored in this world, but also in heaven will be more especially honored. And he adds, that in heaven they will have a peculiarly rich device and livery, by which they will be known as servants of the queen of heaven and as the people of her court, according to those words of Proverbs: "All her domestics are clothed with double garments."§

St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi saw a small vessel in the midst of the sea, in which all the servants of Mary had taken shelter; she herself steering it, safely conducted them to port. By this the saint understood that they who live under the protection of Mary, are rescued, in the midst of

* Certissimum est signum salutis æternæ consequendæ.

† Habentes devotionem hanc, signum est prædestinationis permagnum ad gloriam. P. 2, Ros. c. 11.

‡ Signum sit tibi probabilissimum æternæ salutis, si perseveranter in die beatam virginem in Psalterio salutaveris. P. 44, de Psalt. c. 44.

§ Omnes domestici ejus vestiti sunt duplicibus. xxxi. 21.

all the dangers of this life, from the shipwreck of sin, and from damnation, for by her they are guided in safety to the port of paradise. Let us, then, strive to enter this blessed little vessel of the mantle of Mary, and there let us dwell secure of the kingdom of heaven; for the Church sings, "Holy mother of God, all those who are to be partakers of eternal joy dwell with thee, and live under thy protection."*

EXAMPLE.

Cesarius relates,† that a certain Cistercian monk, who was a devoted servant of our blessed Lady, desired very earnestly a visit from his dear Lady, and was praying her continually to grant him this favor. He went one night into the garden, and while he stood there looking up to heaven, breathing forth to his queen in ardent sighs his desire to see her, a beautiful and radiant virgin descended, and said to him: "Thomas, wouldst thou like to hear me sing?" "Certainly," he answered, and then she sang so sweetly that it seemed to the devout religious that he was in paradise. Having finished her song, she disappeared, leaving him absorbed with an ardent desire to know who it could have been; and, soon after, another extremely beautiful virgin appeared to him, who, like the first, allowed him the pleasure of hearing her

* Sicut letantium omnium habitatio est in te, sancti Dei genitrix.
† Lib. 7, Dial. c. 3.

sing. He could not refrain from asking this one who she was, and the virgin answered: "She whom you saw a little while ago was Catherine, and I am Agnes, both martyrs for Jesus Christ, sent by our Lady to console you. Give thanks to Mary, and prepare for a greater favor." Having said this she disappeared, but left the religious with a greater hope of finally seeing his queen. Nor was he deceived, for shortly after he saw a great light and felt a new joy flowing into his heart, for in the midst of that light the mother of God appeared to him surrounded by angels, and of a beauty far surpassing that of the other two saints who had appeared to him. She said to him: "My dear servant and son, I have been pleased with the devotion which you have offered me, and have graciously heard your prayers: you have desired to see me; look on me, and I will also sing to you." Then the most holy Virgin began to sing with so great sweetness, that the devout religious lost his senses, and fell with his face upon the ground. The matin-bell sounded, the monks assembled, and not seeing Thomas, searched for him in his cell and other parts of the convent, and at last going into the garden they found him there, apparently lifeless. The superior comanded him to tell what had befallen him. And coming to himself, by the power of obedience, he related all the favors which the divine mother had bestowed upon him.

PRAYER.

Oh queen of paradise! mother of holy love! for thou art of all creatures the most lovely, the most beloved of God and his first lover; ah, suffer the vilest and most ungrateful sinner on the earth to love thee, who sees himself released from hell by thy intercession, and without any merit of his own so blessed by thee, that he is enamored of thy goodness. I would wish if I could, to make known to all men who do not know thee, how worthy thou art to be loved, that all might love and honor thee. I would willingly die for love of thee, in defending thy virginity, thy dignity as mother of God, and thy immaculate conception; if it were ever needful for me to die in defence of these thy great privileges. Oh my most beloved mother, graciously accept this my affection, and do not permit that one of thy servants, who loves thee, should ever become an enemy of thy God, whom thou lovest so much. Ah, unhappy me, such once was I when I offended my Lord. But then, oh Mary, I did not love thee, and I sought little to be loved by thee. Now, after the grace of God, I desire nothing else than but to love thee, and to be loved by thee. I do not despair of this on account of my past offences, for I know that thou, oh most benign and grateful Lady, dost not disdain to love even the most miserable sinners who love thee, and never dost allow thyself to be outdone in

love by any one. Oh most lovely queen, I wish to go to thee in paradise, there to love thee. There, at thy feet, I shall better know how amiable thou art, and how much thou hast done to save me; therefore I shall love thee there with greater love, and shall love thee eternally, without the fear that I shall ever cease to love thee. Oh Mary, I have the certain hope of being saved through thee. Pray to Jesus for me. I have no other wish. It is thine to save me; thou art my hope. I will always exclaim, Oh Mary, my hope, thou must save me.

CHAPTER IX.

O CLEMENS! O PIA!

Oh clement! Oh merciful!

HOW GREAT IS THE CLEMENCY AND MERCY OF MARY.

St. Bernard, speaking of the great mercy of Mary for us poor sinners, says that she is the very Land promised by God, flowing with milk and honey.* St. Leo says, that to the Virgin has been given such bowels of compassion, that she not only merits to be called merciful, but should be called mercy itself.† And St. Bonaventure, considering that Mary was made the mother of God for the sake of us sinners, and

* Terra repromissionis Maria lacte et melle manans. Serm. sup. Salv. Reg.

† Maria adeo prædita est misericordiæ visceribus ut non tamen misericors, sed ipsa misericordia dici promereatur. Serm. 1. de Nat. Dom.

that to her was committed the charge of dispensing mercies; and considering, moreover, the great care she has for all those in misery, which renders her so rich in compassion, that she appears to desire nothing else than to relieve the necessitous, says, that when he looked on Mary, it seemed to him that he no longer beheld the divine justice, but only the divine mercy with which Mary is filled.*

In a word, the mercy of Mary is so great, that as Guerric the Abbot says: Her bowels of love can never for a moment cease to bring forth for us the fruits of mercy.† And what, exclaims St. Bernard, can flow but mercy from a fountain of mercy? "Quid de fonte pietatis nisi pietas?"‡ For this reason Mary was called the olive-tree: As a fair olive-tree in the plains: "Quasi oliva speciosa in campis."§ For, as the olive-tree produces nothing but oil, the symbol of mercy, thus from the hands of Mary nothing but graces and mercies proceed. Hence, justly, says the venerable Louis da Ponte, is Mary called the mother of oil, since she is the mother of mercy.‖ If, then, we have recourse to this mother, and ask of her the oil of her mercy, we cannot fear that she will refuse us,

* Certe, Domina, cum te aspicio, nihil nisi misericordiam cerno; nam pro miseris mater Dei facta es, et tibi officium miserendi commissum. Undique sollicita es de miseris, misericordia vallaris; solum misereri videris appetere. Stim. Am.

† Cujus viscera nunquam desistunt fructum parturire pietatis, Serm. 1, de Assum.

‡ Serm. 1, in Dom. p. Ep.

§ Eccli. xxiv. 19.

‖ Merito dici potest mater olei, nam est mater misericordiæ. Lib. 1, in Cant.

as the wise virgins refused the foolish, answering: "Lest there be not enough for us and for you."* No, for she is, indeed, rich in that oil of mercy, as St. Bonaventure remarks: Mary abounds in the oil of mercy: "Maria plena oleo pietatis."† She is called by the Church not only prudent, but most prudent, and by this we may understand, as Hugo of St. Victor says, that Mary is so full of grace and mercy that there is enough for all without exhausting her.‡

But why, I would ask, is it said that this fair olive is in the midst of the plains, and not rather in a garden surrounded by walls and hedges? Cardinal Hugo answers to this question: In order that all may easily see her, and thus may easily have recourse to her, to obtain relief for their necessities.§ St. Antoninus confirms this beautiful thought, when he says: That as all can go and gather the fruit of an olive-tree that is exposed in the open fields, so all, both the just and sinners, can have recourse to Mary to obtain mercy.‖ And then the saint adds: Oh how many sentences of punishment have been revoked through the merciful prayers of this most

* Ne forte non sufficiat nobis et vobis. Matth. xxv. 9.

† Maria plena oleo pietatis. In. Spec. cap. 7.

‡ Gratia plena, et in tantum plena, ut ex tua redundante oleo totus mundus hauriat. Si enim prudentes Virgines oleum acceperunt in vasis cum lampadibus, tu prudentissima Virgo gestasti vas redundans et indeficiens, ex quo, effuso oleo misericordiæ, omnium lampades illuminares.

§ Ut omnes eam respiciant, omnes ad eam confugiant.

‖ Ad olivam in campis omnes possunt accedere, et accipere fructum ejus. Ad Mariam et justi et peccatores possunt accedere, ut inde misericordiam accipiant. P. 3, tit. 31, c. 4.

holy Virgin, in favor of sinners who have had recourse to her!* And what more secure refuge can we find, says the devout Thomas à Kempis, than the compassionate heart of Mary? There the poor find shelter; the sick medicine; the afflicted consolation; the doubtful counsel; the abandoned help.†

Wretched should we be, if we had not this mother of mercy, mindful and solicitous to help us in our miseries! "Where there is no wife," says the Holy Spirit, "he mourneth that is in want."‡ This wife, remarks St. John Damascene, is certainly Mary, without whom the sick man suffers and mourns.§ So, indeed, it is, since God has ordained that all graces should be dispensed by the prayers of Mary: where these are wanting, there is no hope of mercy, as our Lord signified to St. Bridget, saying to her: "Unless Mary interposes by her prayers, there is no hope of mercy."‖

But perhaps we fear that Mary does not see or pity our miseries. Oh, no! she sees them and feels them more than we do ourselves. And who among the saints can be found, says St.

* O quot sententias flagellorum propter peccata hæc sanctissima Virgo misericorditer revocavit!

† Non est tutior locus ad latendum, quam sinus Mariæ. Ibi pauper habet domicilium, ibi infirmus invenit remedium, tristis solatium; ibi turbatus consilium, ibi destitutus acquirit juvamentum.

‡ Ubi non est mulier ingemiscit egens. Eccli. xxxvi. 27.

§ Ingemiscit infirmus, ubi non fuerit hæc sanctissima mater.

‖ Nisi preces Mariæ intervenirent, non esset spes misericordiæ. Rev. l. 6, c. 26.

Antoninus, who pities us in our miseries as Mary does?* Hence, wherever she sees misery she cannot refrain from hastening to relieve it with her great compassion.† Thus Richard of St. Victor remarks, and Mendoza confirms it by saying: Therefore, oh blessed Virgin, wherever thou seest misery, there thou dost pour forth thy mercies.‡ And our good mother, as she herself declares, will never cease to exercise this office of mercy: And unto the world to come I shall not cease to be; and in the holy dwelling-place, I have ministered before him.§ Upon which words Cardinal Hugo remarks: I will not cease, says Mary, even to the end of the world, to succor men in their miseries, and to pray for sinners, that they may be saved and rescued from eternal misery.‖

Suetonius relates of the Emperor Titus, that he was so desirous to grant favors to those who asked them of him, that on those days when he had no opportunity of doing so, he would say, sorrowfully, I have lost a day: "Diem perdidi." This day has been lost to me, because I have passed it without benefiting any one. Probably

* Non reperitur aliquis sanctorum ita compati in infirmitatibus, sicut mulier hæc beatissima Virgo Maria. P. 4, t. 15. c. 2.

† Ubicumque fuerit miseria, tua currit et succurrit misericordia. In Cant. 4, 5.

‡ Itaque, O B. Virgo, ubi miserias invenis, ibi tuas misericordias effundis. Cap. 4, 1, Reg.

§ Et usque ad futurum sæculum non desinam, ut in habitatione sancta coram ipso ministravi. Eccli. xxiv. 14.

‖ Usque ad futurum sæculum, id est beatorum, non desinam miseriis subvenire, et pro peccatoribus orare.

Titus said this more through vanity, or a desire for esteem, than through a movement of charity. But our Empress Mary, if a day should ever pass in which she did not confer some favor, would say it only because she is full of charity, and of a desire to do us good; for as Bernardine de Bustis says, she is more desirous to confer favors on us, than we are to receive them from her.* And this same author adds, that when we have recourse to her, we shall always find her with her hands full of mercy and liberality.†

Rebecca was the type of Mary, who when the servant of Abraham asked her for a little water, answered that she would give him water enough not only for himself, but for his camels also.‡ Hence the devout St. Bernard addressing the blessed Virgin, says: Oh Lady, not to the servant of Abraham only, but also to his camels give from thy overflowing pitcher.§ By which he intends to say: Oh Lady, thou art merciful and more liberal than Rebecca, therefore thou dost not rest contented with dispensing the favors of thy unbounded compassion to the servants of Abraham alone by whom are

* Plus vult illa bonum tibi facere et largiri gratiam, quam tu accipere concupiscas. Mar. p. 1, Serm. 5, de Nov. Mar.

† Invenies eam in manibus plenam misericordia et liberalitate. Loc. cit.

‡ Quin et camelis tuis hauriam aquam, donec cuncti bibant. Gen. xxiv. 19.

§ Domina, nec puero Abrahæ tantum, sed et camelis tribue de superefluente hydria tua. Serm. Sup. Miss.

meant the faithful servants of God, but thou dost bestow them also on the camels, who represent sinners. And, as Rebecca gave more than she was asked, so Mary bestows more than we pray for. The liberality of Mary, says Richard of St. Laurence, resembles the liberality of her Son, who always gives more than is asked, and is therefore named by St. Paul: "Rich to all that call upon him;"* that is, giving abundantly his graces to all those that have recourse to him with their prayers. Hear the words of Richard: The bounty of Mary is like the bounty of her Son; she gives more than is asked.† Hence a devout author, addressing the Virgin, says: Oh Lady, pray for me, for thou wilt ask favors for me with greater devotion than I can do; and thou wilt obtain from God graces greater by far than I can pray for.‡

When the Samaritans refused to receive Jesus Christ and his doctrine, St. James and St. John said to their Master: "Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" But the Saviour answered: "You know not of what spirit you are."§ As if he had said: I am of so mild and merciful a spirit, that I have come from heaven to save, not to punish sinners, and would you wish to see

* Dives in omnes qui invocant illum. Rom. x. 12.

† Largitas Mariæ assimilat largitatem filii sui; dat amplius quam petatur. De Laud. Virg.

‡ Majori devotione orabis pro me, quam ego auderem petere; et majora mihi impetrabis quam petere præsumam.

§ Noscitis cujus spiritus estis. Luc. ix. 55.

them lost? What fire? What punishment? Be silent, speak to me no more of punishment, that is not my spirit. But we cannot doubt that Mary, whose spirit is in every thing so like that of her Son, is wholly inclined to exercise mercy; for, as she told St. Bridget, she is called the mother of mercy, and the mercy of God itself has made her so compassionate and sweet towards all.* Wherefore Mary was seen by St. John clothed with the sun: "And there appeared a great wonder in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun."† Upon which passage St. Bernard remarks, addressing the Virgin: Thou hast clothed the sun, and art thyself clothed with it.‡ Oh Lady, thou hast clothed the sun, the divine Word, with human flesh, but he hath clothed thee with his power and his mercy.

So compassionate, then, and kind is this queen, says St. Bernard, that when a sinner recommends himself to her mercy, she does not begin to examine his merits, and whether he is worthy or not of being heard, but she graciously hears all and succors them.§ Hence St. Idelbert remarks, that Mary is called fair as the moon: "Pulchra ut Luna:"‖ because, as the moon illuminates and benefits the smallest bodies upon the

* Ego vocor mater misericordiæ, et vero misericordia illius misericordem me fecit. Rev. l. 1, c. 6.

† Et signum magnum apparuit in cœlo, mulier amicta sole. Apoc. xii. 1.

‡ Vestis solem, et vestiris ab eo.

§ Non discutit merita, sed omnibus exorabilem se præbet. Serm in Sign. Magn.

‖ Cant. 6, 9.

earth, so Mary enlightens and helps the most unworthy sinners.* And although the moon receives all her light from the sun, she moves more quickly than the sun; for, as a certain author remarks, what the sun does in a year, the moon does in a month.† Hence, says St. Anselm: Our relief is sometimes more immediate when the name of Mary is invoked than when we invoke the name of Jesus.‡ Wherefore Hugo of St. Victor tells us, that if by reason of our sins we fear to draw near to God, because he is an infinite majesty that we have offended, we should not hesitate to have recourse to Mary, because in her we shall find nothing to alarm us. She is indeed holy, immaculate, queen of the world, and mother of God; but she is of our flesh, and a child of Adam, like ourselves.§

In a word, says St. Bernard, whatever appertains to Mary is full of grace and mercy; for she, as mother of mercy, has become all things to all, and by her great charity has made herself a debtor to the just and to sinners, and open to all the bowels of her compassion, that all may share it.‖ As "the Devil," according to St. Pe-

* Pulchra ut luna quia pulchrum est benefacere indignis. Epist. 26.

† Quod sol facit in anno, luna facit in mense. Jo. di Minian. l. 1, de Cœl. c. 8.

‡ Velocior nonnumquam est nostra salus, invocato nomine Mariæ, quam invocato nomine Jesu. De Excell. Virg. c. 6.

§ Si pertimescis ad Deum accedere, respice ad Mariam; non illic invenis quod timeas, genus tuum vides.

‖ Quæ ad eam pertinent, plena omnia pietatis et gratiæ. Denique omnia omnibus facta est, sapientibus et insipientibus copiosissima

ter, "goeth about seeking whom he may devour,"* so, on the contrary, says Bernardine de Bustis, Mary goeth about seeking to whom she can give life and salvation.†

We should understand that the protection of Mary, as St. Germanus says, is greater and more powerful than we can comprehend.‡ And how is it that the same Lord, who was under the old law so severe in punishing, exercises so great mercy towards the greatest sinners? Thus asks the author del Pomerio;§ and he also answers: He does all this for the love and merits of Mary.‖ Oh, how long since would the world have been destroyed, says St. Fulgentius, if Mary had not preserved it by her intercession!¶ But we may with confidence go to God, as St. Arnold Carnotensis asserts, and hope for every blessing, now that the Son is our mediator with the divine Father, and the mother with the Son. How can it be that the Father will refuse to hear graciously the Son, when he shows him the wounds he has received

charitate debitricem se fecit. Omnibus misericordiæ suæ sinum aperit, ut de plenitudine ejus accipiant omnes. Super Sign. Magn.

* Circuit quærens quem devoret. Ep. 1, c. 5.

† Ipsa semper circuit, quærens quem salvet. Marial. p. 3. Serm. 3.

‡ Patrocinium tuum majus est, quam apprehendi possit. De Zona. Virg.

§ Quare parcit nunc mundo ipse Deus, qui olim multo his minora peccata acrius punivit? Ap. P. Pepe. Grand. etc.

‖ Totum hoc facit propter B. Virginem, et ejus merita.

¶ Cœlum et terra jamdudum ruissent, si Maria suis precibus non sustentasset.

for sinners? And how can it be that the Son will not graciously hear the mother, when she shows him the breasts from which she has nourished us?* St. Peter Chrysologus says with great energy, that this favored Virgin, having received God in her womb, demands in return, peace for the world, salvation for the lost, life for the dead.†

Oh how many, exclaims the Abbot of Celles, who merits to be condemned by the divine justice, are saved by the mercy of Mary! for she is the treasure of God and the treasure of all graces; therefore it is that our salvation is in her hands.‡ Let us always then have recourse to this mother of mercy, and confidently hope to be saved by means of her intercession; since she, as Bernardine de Bustis encourages us to believe, is our salvation, our life, our hope, our counsel, our refuge, our help.§ Mary is that very throne of grace, says St. Antoninus, to which the apostle exhorts us to have recourse with confidence, that we may obtain the divine

* Securum accessum jam habet homo ad Deum, ubi mediatorem causæ suæ filium habet ante Patrem, et ante filium, matrem. Christus ostendit Patri latus et vulnera, Maria Christo pectus, et ubera. De Laud. Virg.

† Una puella sic Deum in sui pectoris capit hospitio, ut pacem terris, salutem perditis, vitam mortuis, pro ipsa domo exigat pensionem. Serm. 140.

‡ Sæpe quos justitia filii potest damnare, mater misericordiæ liberat. Thesaurus Domini est, et thesauraria gratiarum. Salus nostra in manu illius est. Prolog. in Contempl. Virg.

§ Hæc est nostra salus, vita, spes, consilium, refugium, auxilium nostrum. P. 1, Ser. 6, de Com. Mar.

mercy, with all needed help for our salvation.* To the throne of grace, that is, to Mary, as St. Antoninus remarks.† Hence, Mary was called by St. Catherine of Sienna: The dispenser of divine mercy: "Administratrix misericordiæ."

Let us conclude, then, with the beautiful and sweet exclamation of St. Bernard upon the words: Oh clement, oh merciful, oh sweet Virgin Mary! "Oh clemens, O pia, O dulcis Virgo Maria." Oh Mary, thou art clement to the unhappy, merciful to those who pray thee, sweet to those who love thee: clement to the penitent, merciful to the advancing, sweet to the perfect. Thou showest thyself clement by rescuing us from punishment, merciful by bestowing on us graces, sweet by giving thyself to those who seek thee.‡

EXAMPLE.

Father Charles Bovius relates that in Domans, in France, lived a married man who had held a criminal connection with another woman. Now the wife being unable to endure this, continually besought God to punish the guilty parties; and one day in particular went to an altar of the

* Adeamus cum fiducia ad thronum gratiæ, ut misericordiam consequamur, ut gratiam inveniamus in auxilio opportuno. Hebr. iv. 16.

† Ad thronum gratiæ, scilicet ad Mariam. P. 4, t. 15, c. 14, s. 7.

‡ Clemens indigentibus, pia exorantibus, dulcis diligentibus. O clemens pœnitentibus, pia proficientibus, dulcis contemplantibus. O clemens liberando, O pie largiendo, O dulcis te donando. Sup. Salv. Reg.

blessed Virgin, which was in a certain church, to implore vengeance upon the woman who had alienated her husband from her; and this very woman went also every day to the same altar, to repeat a "Hail Mary." One night the divine mother appeared in a dream to the wife, who, on seeing her, began her accustomed petition: "Justice, mother of God, justice." But the blessed Lady answered: "Justice! do you seek justice from me? Go and find others to execute justice for you. It belongs not to me to do it for you. Be it known to you," she added, "that this very sinner offers every day a devotion in my honor, and that I cannot allow any sinner who does this, to suffer and be punished for his sins." The next day the wife went to hear mass in the above-named church of our Lady, and on coming out met her husband's friend; at the sight of her she began to reproach her and call her a sorceress, who had even enchanted with her sorceries the blessed Virgin. "Be silent," cried the people: "what are you saying?" "I be silent!" she answered: "what I say is only too true; this night the Virgin appeared to me; and when I implored justice of her, she answered me, that she could not grant it on account of a salutation which this wicked woman repeats daily in her honor." They asked the woman what salutation she repeated to the mother of God. She answered that it was the "Hail Mary;" and then on hearing that the blessed Virgin had dealt with her so mercifully

in return for that trivial act of devotion, she cast herself on the ground before the sacred image, and there, in the presence of all the people, asked pardon for her scandalous life, and made a vow of perpetual continence. She afterwards put on a religious habit, built for herself a little cell near the church, where she retired, and persevered in continual penance until the day of her death.

PRAYER.

Oh mother of mercy! since thou art so compassionate, and hast so great a desire to do good to us sinners, and to satisfy our demands, I, the most wretched of all men, to-day have recourse to thy mercy, that thou mayest grant my requests. Let others ask what they will, health of body, wealth, or temporal advantages; I come to ask of thee, oh Lady, those things which thou thyself dost most desire of me, and which are most comformable and most pleasing to thy sacred heart. Thou who wast so humble, obtain for me humility and love of contempt. Thou who wast so patient in the difficulties of this life, obtain for me patience in things contrary to my wishes. Thou who didst overflow with love to God, obtain for me the gift of a holy and pure love. Thou who wast all charity towards the neighbor, obtain for me charity towards all men, and especially towards those who are my enemies. Thou who wast wholly united to the divine will, obtain for me a perfect uniformity with the will

of that God in all his dispositions concerning me. Thou, in a word, art the most holy of all creatures; oh Mary, obtain for me the grace to become a saint. Thy love is unfailing; thou canst and wilt obtain all things for me. Nothing, then, can hinder me from receiving thy graces but my neglect to invoke thee, or my want of confidence in thy intercession. But thou thyself must obtain for me the grace to seek thee, and this grace of confidence in thy intercession. These two greatest gifts I ask from thee—from thee will I receive them—from thee do I confidently hope for them. Oh Mary! Mary, my mother, my hope, my love, my life, my refuge, and my consolation. Amen.

CHAPTER X.

O DULCIS VIRGO MARIA.

Oh sweet Virgin Mary!

HOW SWEET IS THE NAME OF MARY IN LIFE AND IN DEATH!

THE great name of Mary, which was given to the divine mother, was not found on earth, neither was it invented by the mind or will of men, as were all other names that are in use among them; but it came from heaven, and was given to the Virgin by divine ordinance, as St. Jerome,* St. Epiphanius † St. Antoninus,‡ and others attest. The name of Mary was drawn from the treasury of the divinity, as Richard of St. Laurence says:§ "De thesauro divinitatis Mariæ nomen evolvitur." From the treasury of the divinity, oh Mary, came forth thy excellent and admirable name; for the Most Holy Trinity, the same author goes on to say, gave to thee this name, next to the name of thy Son, so superior to every name, and attached to it such majesty and power, that when it is uttered, all in heaven, earth, and hell

* Lib. de Nat. Mar.
† Or. de Præs. Deip.
‡ Hist. tit. 4. c. 6.
§ De Laud. Virg. p. 14.

must fall prostrate and venerate it.* Among all the other privileges which the Lord has attached to the name of Mary, let us see how sweet he has made it to the servants of this most holy Lady in life as well as in death.

To begin with life, the holy anchorite, Honorius, says, that the name of Mary is full of all divine sweetness.† And the glorious St. Anthony of Padua attributes to the name of Mary the same sweetness as St. Bernard attributed to the name of Jesus. The name of Jesus, said the latter, the name of Mary, said the former, is joy to the heart, honey to the mouth, melody to the ear of their devoted servants.‡ It is related in the life of the venerable Father John Ancina, Bishop of Saluzzo, that when he pronounced the name of Mary, he experienced so great a sensible sweetness that he even tasted it on his lips. We also read that a certain woman in Cologne told the Bishop Marsillius, that whenever she pronounced the name of Mary she perceived in her mouth a taste sweeter than honey. Marsillius made the trial, and he also experienced the same sweetness. We read in the holy Canticles, that at the Assumption of the Virgin, the angels three times asked her name: "Who is she

* Dedit tibi, Maria, tota Trinitas nomen post nomen filii tui supra omne nomen; ut in nomine tuo omne genuflectatur, cœlestium, terrestrium, et infernorum. De Laud. v. l. 1, c. 2.

† Hoc nomen Mariæ plenum est omni dulcedine ac suavitate divina.

‡ Nomen Jesu . . Nomen Mariæ jubilus in corde, mel in ore, in aure melos.

that goeth up by the desert as a pillar of smoke?"* "Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising?"† And in another: "Who is this that cometh up from the desert, flowing with delights?"‡ Richard of St. Laurence inquires why the angels so often asked the name of this queen, and answers: The sound of the name of Mary was so sweet to the angels, and they repeated the question that they might hear it repeated also.§

But I do not hear speak of this sensible sweetness, since it is not commonly granted to all, but I speak of the salutary sweetness of consolation, love, joy, confidence, and strength, which the name of Mary universally gives to those who, with devotion, pronounce it. Speaking on this subject, Francone the Abbot says, that next to the holy name of Jesus, the name of Mary is so rich in blessings, that no other name is uttered on earth or in heaven from which devout souls receive so much grace, hope, and sweetness. ‖ For the name of Mary, he goes on to say, contains in itself something admirable, sweet, and

* Quæ est ista, quæ ascendit per desertum, sicut virgula fumi? Cant. iii. 6.

† Quæ est ista, quæ progreditur, quasi aurora consurgens? Cant. vi. 9.

‡ Quæ est ista, quæ ascendit de deserto deliciis affluens? viii. 5.

§ Forsitan, quia dulce nomen sibi desiderant responderi. De Laud. Virg. c. 2.

‖ Neque enim post filii nomen aliud nomen cœlum et terra nominat, unde tantum gratiæ, spei, et suavitatis piæ mentes concipiant. De Grat. Nov. Test. tr. 6.

divine, which, when it meets a friendly heart, breathes into it an odor of holy sweetness. And the wonder of this great name is, he concludes, that if heard a thousand times by the lovers of Mary, it is always heard as new, the sweetness they experience in hearing it spoken being always the same.*

The blessed Henry Suso, also speaking of this sweetness, says, that in pronouncing the name of Mary, he felt his confidence so much increased, and his love so joyfully enkindled, that amidst the joy and tears with which he pronounced the beloved name, he thought his heart would have leaped from his mouth; and he affirmed that this most sweet name, as honeycomb, melted into the depths of his soul. Whereat he exclaims: Oh most sweet name! oh Mary, what must thou thyself be, if thy name alone is so lovely and sweet?

The enamored St. Bernard, too, addressing his good mother with tenderness, says to her: Oh great, oh merciful Mary, most holy Virgin, worthy of all praise, thy name is so sweet and lovely that it cannot be spoken without enkindling love to thee and to God in the heart of him who pronounces it; the thought of it alone is enough to console thy lovers, and inflame them

* Nomen namque Mariæ mirum quid, suave, atque divinum in se continet, et cum convenit amicis cordibus, amicæ suavitatis odorem spiret. Et mirum illud est de nomine Mariæ, ut millies auditum semper audiatur quasi novum. De. grat. Nov. Test. tr. 6.

with a far greater love to thee.* If riches are a consolation to the poor, because by them they are relieved of their miseries, oh how much more, says Richard of St. Laurence, does thy name console us sinners, oh Mary; far more than the riches of earth it relieves us in the troubles of the present life.†

In a word, thy name, oh mother of God, is full of grace and divine blessings, as St. Methodius says.‡ And St. Bonaventure affirms that thy name cannot be pronounced but it brings some grace to him who devoutly utters it.§ So great is the virtue of thy name, oh most compassionate Virgin, says the Idiot, that no one can pronounce it, however hardened, however desponding may be his heart, and not find it wonderfully softened; for it is thou who dost console sinners with the hope of pardon and of grace.‖ Thy most sweet name, according to St. Ambrose, is a sweet ointment, which breathes the fragrance of divine grace.¶ The saint thus invokes the

* O magna, O pia, O multum laudabilis Maria, tu nec nominari potes quin accendas; nec cogitari, quin recrees affectus diligentium te. Ap. S. Bon. Spec. c. 8.

† Mariæ nomen longe melius quam divitiæ, quia melius augustiam relevat. De Laud. Virg. c. 2.

‡ Tuum, Dei genitrix, nomen divinis benedictionibus et gratiis ex omni parte refertum. Orat. in Hyp.

§ Nomen tuum devote nominari non potest sine nominantis utilitate. Spec. B. Virg. c. 8.

‖ Tanta est virtus tui sacratissimi nominis, semper benigna Virgo Maria, quod mirabiliter emollit duritia cordis humani. Peccator per te respirat in spe veniæ et gratiæ. Idiot. in Alph. Mar. p. 827.

¶ Unguentum nomen tuum. Descendat istud unguentum in animæ

divine mother: May this oil of salvation descend into the depths of our soul; by which he intends to say: Oh Lady, remind us often to pronounce thy name with love and confidence; for thus to name thee, either is a sign that we already possess divine grace, or it is an earnest that we shall soon recover it.

For as Landolph of Saxony expresses it: The remembrance of thy name, oh Mary, consoles the afflicted, brings back the wanderer to the path of salvation, encourages the sinner, and saves him from despair;* and Father Pelbart remarks, that as Jesus Christ by his five wounds has prepared for the world the remedy for its woes, thus also Mary, with her most holy name, which is composed of five letters, confers every day pardon upon sinners.†

For this reason, the holy name of Mary in the sacred Canticles is compared to oil: Thy name is as oil poured out: "Oleum effusum nomen tuum."‡ The blessed Alanus, commenting on this passage, says: The glory of her name is compared to oil poured out. As oil heals the sick, diffuses odor, and kindles flame; thus the

præcordia, S. Maria, quo divinæ gratiæ spiramenta redoleam. De Instit. Virg. c. 13.

* O Maria, tui recordatio nominis mœstos lætificat, errantes ad viam salutis revocat, et peccatores ne desperent confortat. In vita Christ. p. 2, c. 86.

† Sic Maria suo sanctissimo nomine, quod quinque litteris constat, confert quotidie veniam peccatoribus. Stellar. a. 2.

‡ Cant. i. 2.

name of Mary heals sinners, rejoices hearts, and inflames them with divine love.* Hence Richard of St. Laurence encourages sinners to invoke this great name, because that alone will be sufficient to cure all their maladies; adding, that there is no disease so malignant that it will not at once yield to the virtue of this name.†

On the other hand, the devils, as Thomas à Kempis affirms, are in such fear of the queen of heaven that at the sound of her great name they flee from him who pronounces it as from burning fire.‡ The Virgin herself revealed to St. Bridget that there is no sinner living so cold in divine love, that if he invokes her holy name, with the resolution to amend, the devil will not instantly depart from him.§ And she at another time assured her of this, telling her that all the demons so greatly venerate and fear her name, that when they hear it pronounced they immediately release the soul which they held in their chains.‖

* Gloria nominis ejus oleo effuso comparatur. Oleum ægrotantem sanat, odorem parit, flammam accendit. In Cant. 1, 2.

† Peccator es? ad nomen Mariæ confugias; ipsum solum sufficit ad medendum. Nulla pestis, quæ ad nomen Mariæ non cedat continuo. De Laud. Virg. p. 14.

‡ Expavescunt cœli reginam spiritus maligni, et diffugiunt, audito nomine sancto ejus, velut ab igne. Serm. 4, p. 3, ad Novit.

§ Nullus est in hac vita tam frigidus ab amore Dei, qui si invocaverit nomen meum, cum proposito pœnitendi, statim diabolus ab ipso non discedat. Rev. lib. 1, c. 9.

‖ Omnes dæmones verentur hoc nomen, et timent, qui audientes hoc nomen Mariæ, statim relinquunt animam de unguibus, quibus tenebant eam. Rev. l. 2, c. 19.

And as the rebel angels depart from sinners who invoke the name of Mary, thus, on the contrary, our Lady herself told St. Bridget, that the good angels draw more closely around those just souls who devoutly pronounce it.* And St. Germanus assures us, that as breathing is a sign of life, so the frequent utterance of the name of Mary is a sign that we are already living in divine grace, or that we shall soon receive that life; for this powerful name is effectual to obtain help and life for him who devoutly invokes it.† Finally, Richard of St. Laurence adds, that this admirable name is like a tower of strength, by taking shelter in which the sinner will be saved from death, since from this celestial tower the most abandoned sinners come forth securely defended and saved.‡

A tower of strength, thus continues the same Richard, which not only shields sinners from punishment, but also defends the just from the assaults of hell; and he adds: Next to the name of Jesus there is no name which gives such support, and through which so great salvation is be-

* Angeli boni, audito nomine meo, justis magis propinquant. Ap. Dion. Cart. de Laud. V. cap. ult.

† Quomodo corpus enim vitalis signum operationis habet respirationem, ita sanctissimum nomen tuum, O Virgo, quod in ore servorum tuorum versatur assidue, vitæ et auxilii non solum est signum, sed etiam ea procurat et conciliat. De Zona. Virg.

‡ Turris fortissima nomen Dominæ, ad ipsam fugiet peccator, et liberabitur. Hæc defendit quoslibet, et quantumlibet peccatores. De Laud. Virg. l. 11.

stowed upon men, as this great name of Mary.* Especially is it everywhere known, and the servants of Mary daily experience, that her great name gives strength to overcome temptations against chastity. The same author, remarking on the words of St. Luke: And the name of the Virgin was Mary: "Et nomen Virginis Maria,"† says, that these two names, of Mary and of Virgin, are united by the evangelist to show that the name of this most pure Virgin can never be separated from chastity.‡ Hence St. Peter Chrysologus says, that the name Mary is a sign of chastity: "Nomen hoc indicium castitatis;"§ meaning, that whoever is in doubt whether he has yielded to temptations against purity, if he remembers having invoked the name of Mary may be sure that he has not violated chastity.

Let us, then, always follow the beautiful counsel of St. Bernard, who says: In every danger of losing divine grace let us think of Mary, let us invoke the name of Mary together with that of Jesus, for these names are always united. Let these two most sweet and powerful names never depart from our heart and our lips, for they will always give us strength to keep us from

* Non est in aliquo nomine tam potens adjutorium, nec est aliud nomen datum hominibus post nomen Jesu, ex quo tanta salus refundatur hominibus, sicut nomen Mariæ. De Laud. Virg. c. 2.

† Luc. i. 27.

‡ Hoc nomen semper cum castitate conjunctum esse debet. Loc. cit.

§ Serm. 146.

falling, and to conquer every temptation.* Very precious are the graces which Jesus Christ has promised to those who are devoted to the name of Mary, as he himself, speaking to his holy mother, gave St. Bridget to understand, revealing to her that whoever will invoke the name of Mary with confidence and a purpose of amendment, shall receive three special graces: namely, a perfect contrition for his sins, the grace to make satisfaction for them and strength to obtain perfection, and at last, the glory of paradise;† for as the divine Saviour added: "Thy words are so sweet and dear to me, oh my mother, that I cannot refuse thee what thou dost ask."‡

Finally, St. Ephrem adds that the name of Mary is the key of the gate of heaven to him who devoutly invokes it;§ and therefore St. Bonaventure rightly calls Mary the salvation of all those who invoke her: "O salus te invocantium;" as if it were the same thing to invoke the name of Mary and to obtain eternal salvation; for as the Idiot affirms: The invocation of this holy and sweet name leads to the acquisition of super-

* In periculis, in angustiis, in rebus dubiis Mariam cogita, Mariam invoca. Non recedat ab ore, non recedat a corde. Hom. 2, Sup. Miss.

† Quicumque invocaverit nomen tuum, et in te sperabit cum proposito emendandi, tria illi dabuntur, contritio peccatorum, eorum satisfactio, et fortitudo ad proficiendum et insuper regnum cœlorum. Rev. l. 1, c 10.

‡ Tanta enim est in me dulcedo verborum tuorum, quod negare non valeo, quod tu petis.

§ Nomen Mariæ est reseratorium portæ cœli. In Deprec ad Virg.

abundant grace in this life, and sublime glory in another.* If you desire, then, brethren, concludes Thomas à Kempis, to be consoled in every affliction, have recourse to Mary, invoke Mary, honor Mary, recommend yourselves to Mary. Rejoice with Mary, weep with Mary, pray with Mary, walk with Mary, and with Mary seek Jesus; in a word, with Jesus and Mary desire to live and die. Do this, he adds, and you will always advance in the way of the Lord; for Mary will pray for you, and the Son will surely graciously listen to the mother.† Such are his beautiful words.

Very sweet, then, in life to her servants, is the most holy name of Mary, on account of the great graces which it obtains for them, as we have seen above; but sweeter still will it be to them in dying by the sweet and holy death she will obtain for them. Father Sertorio Caputo, of the Society of Jesus, exhorted all those who were called to the bedside of the dying, often to pronounce the name of Mary, saying that this name of life and of hope, pronounced in death, is alone sufficient to scatter the enemies

* Devota invocatio hujus nominis ducit ad virorem gratiæ in præsenti, et ad virorem gloriæ in futuro. De Laud. Virg. l. 2, c. 2.

† Si consolari in omni tribulatione quæritis, accedite ad Mariam, Mariam invocate, Mariam honorate, Mariæ vos commendate; cum Maria gaudete, cum Maria dolete, cum Maria orate, cum Maria ambulate, cum Maria Jesum quærite; cum Maria et Jesu vivere et mori desiderate. Fratres, si ista exercetis, proficietis. Maria pro vobis libenter orabit, et Jesu libenter matrem suam exaudiet. Serm. par. 3, Serm. 2.

and to comfort the dying in all their anguishes. St. Camillus of Lellis also strongly recommended it to his religious, that they should remind the dying often to invoke the name of Mary and of Jesus, as he always practised it with others; but more sweetly he practised it himself at the moment of his death, when, as we read in his life, he named with so much tenderness his beloved names of Jesus and Mary, that he inflamed also with love of them all those who heard him. And at length, with his eyes fixed on their adorable image, and his arms crossed, the saint expired in celestial peace, pronouncing with his last breath the most sweet names of Jesus and Mary. This short prayer of invoking the holy names of Jesus and Mary, says Thomas à Kempis, which it is as easy to retain in the memory as it is sweet to consider, is at the same time powerful to protect whoever uses it from all the enemies of our salvation.*

Blessed is he, says St. Bonaventure, who loves thy sweet name, oh mother of God.† Thy name is so glorious and admirable, that those who remember to invoke it at the moment of death, do not then fear all the assaults of the enemy.‡

Oh, the happy lot of dying as Father Fulgentius of Ascoli, a Capuchin, died, who expired

* Hæc brevis oratio, Jesu et Maria, facilis est ad tenendum, dulcis ad cogitandum, fortis ad protegendum.

† Beatus vir qui diligit nomen tuum, Maria!

‡ Gloriosum et admirabile nomen tuum; qui illud retinent, non expavescunt in puncto mortis. Spec. B. Virg.

singing: Oh Mary, Mary, the most lovely of all beings, let me depart in thy company. Or, as blessed Henry the Cistercian, of whom it is related in the annals of the order, that he died with the name of Mary on his lips.* Let us pray, then, my devout reader, let us pray God to grant us this grace, that the last word we pronounce at death may be the name of Mary; as St. Germanus desired and prayed.† Oh sweet death, oh safe death, that is accompanied and protected by such a name of salvation, that God does not permit it to be invoked in death, except by those whom he will save!

Oh, my sweet Lady and mother, I love thee much, and because I love thee, I love also thy holy name. I purpose and hope with thy aid always to invoke it in life and death. For the glory, then, of thy name (let us conclude with the tender prayer of St. Bonaventure), when my soul departs from this world, wilt thou come to meet it, oh blessed Lady, and take it in thy arms?‡ Do not disdain, oh Mary, let us continue to pray with the saint, to come and comfort it, then, with thy sweet presence. Thou art its ladder and way to paradise. Wilt thou obtain for me the grace of pardon and eternal

* Inter ipsam dulcissimi nominis articulationem. An. 1109.

† Dei matris nomen sit mihi ultimus linguæ loquentis motus. Orat. 6, ad Ann. Virg.

‡ Propter honorem nominis tui in exitu animæ meæ de hoc mundo occurre illi, domina, et suscipe eam. In Psalt. Delp

rest?* And the saint then terminates with saying: Oh Mary, our advocate, to thee it belongs to shield thy servants, and defend their cause before the tribunal of Jesus Christ.†

EXAMPLE.

It is related by Father Rho, in his Sabbati, and by Father Lireo, in his Trisagio Mariana, of a certain young maiden of Guelder-land, who lived about the year 1465, that she was sent one day by her uncle to purchase something at the market of the city of Nimeguen, with the direction to go and pass the night at the house of her aunt, who lived in the town. The girl obeyed, but when she went at night to her aunt's house, she was rudely sent away by her, and she set out on her way homewards. Night overtaking her, she fell into a passion, and called loudly upon the devil to come to her aid. And behold, he suddenly appeared in the form of a man, and promised to assist her, provided she would do one thing. I will do any thing, answered the unhappy creature. I only wish, said the enemy, that henceforth you will not bless yourself with the sign of the cross, and will change your name. As to the cross, she answered, I will no longer sign myself with it, but my name of Mary is too dear to me, I will not change it.

* Consolare eam vultu sancto tuo. Esto illi scala et iter ad paradisum; impetra ei indulgentiam pacis et sedem lucis.

† Sustine devotos, suscipe causas reorum ante tribunal Christi.

Then I will not help you, said the devil. At length, after much debate, is was agreed that she should be called by the first letter of the name of Mary, that is, Emme. They then went together to Antwerp, and the wretched girl remained there six years with her diabolical companion, living so sinful a life, that it was the scandal of the whole place. One day she told the devil that she wished to see her country again; the enemy objected, but finally was obliged to consent. When they entered together the city of Nimeguen, there was just then performing a public representation of the life of the most holy Mary. At such a sight the poor Emme, from that little devotion she had still preserved towards the mother of God, began to weep. "What are we doing here?" said her companion; "would you perform here another comedy?" He then seized her to take her away, but she resisted, and seeing that she was escaping from him, in a rage he raised her into the air and let her fall in the midst of the theatre. The poor girl then related what had happened to her. She went to the parish priest to confess, but he sent her to the Bishop of Cologne, and the bishop sent her to the Pope, who, having heard her confession, imposed it upon her as a penance, that she should wear three rings of iron, one around her neck, and two around her arms. The penitent obeyed, and having arrived at Maestricht, she retired into a convent of penitents, where she lived for fourteen years in severe penance.

One morning she arose from her bed and found the three rings broken. Two years after she died in the odor of sanctity, and wished to have the ring buried with her, which had changed her from a slave of hell into the happy slave of Mary, her deliverer.

PRAYER.

Oh great mother of God, and my mother Mary, it is true that I am unworthy to pronounce thy name, but thou who lovest me, and dost desire my salvation, thou must obtain for me, that, unclean as may be my tongue, I may yet always invoke thy most holy and most powerful name; for thy name is the support of the living, and the salvation of the dying. Ah, most pure Mary! ah, most sweet Mary! make thy name henceforth to be the breath of my life. Oh Lady, do not delay coming to my help when I call upon thee, since in all the temptations which may assail me, in all the necessities I may suffer, I shall never cease calling upon thee, always repeating Mary, Mary. Thus I hope to do in life, thus especially I hope to do in death, that I may afterwards come to praise eternally in heaven thy beloved name: O clemens! O pia! O dulcis Virgo Maria! Ah Mary! Mary most amiable! what comfort, what sweetness, what confidence, what tenderness does my soul feel only in pronouncing thy name, only in thinking of thee! I thank my God and my Lord that he has given

thee, for my good, this name so sweet, so lovely, so powerful.

But, oh my Lady, I am not satisfied with merely pronouncing thy name, I would pronounce it also with love; I desire that my love may remind me to speak thy name at every hour, that I may exclaim with St. Anselm: Oh name of the mother of God, thou art my love. O amor mei nomen matris Dei.

Oh my dear mother Mary! oh my beloved Jesus! may your most sweet names always live in my own and in all hearts. May I forget all other names, that I may remember and always invoke none but your adored names. Ah Jesus, my Redeemer! and my mother Mary, when the moment of my death shall arrive, and my soul shall depart from this life, by your merits grant me the grace then to utter my last accents, repeating: *I love you, Jesus and Mary;* Jesus and Mary, I give you my heart and my soul.

SOME DEVOUT PRAYERS

OF VARIOUS SAINTS

TO THE HOLY MOTHER.

THE following prayers are added, not only for the use of the faithful, but also because they show the great idea which the saints entertained of the power and mercy of Mary, and their great confidence in her patronage.

PRAYER OF ST. EPHREM.

OH immaculate and wholly pure Virgin Mary! mother of God, queen of the universe, our most excellent Lady, thou art superior to all the saints, thou art the only hope of the Fathers, and the joy of the blessed. By thee we have been reconciled to our God. Thou art the only advocate of sinners, the secure haven of the shipwrecked. Thou art the consolation of the world, the redemption of captives, the joy of the sick, the comfort of the afflicted, the refuge and salvation of the whole world. Oh great princess! mother of God! cover us with the wings of thy compassion: have pity on us. We have no hope but in thee, oh most pure Virgin! We are given

to thee, and consecrated to thy service; we bear the name of thy servants; do not permit Lucifer to draw us down to hell. Oh immaculate Virgin! we are under thy protection; therefore, unitedly we have recourse to thee, and supplicate thee to prevent thy Son, whom our sins have offended, from abandoning us to the power of the devil.

Oh full of grace! illuminate my intellect, loosen my tongue that it may sing thy praises, and especially the Angelic Salutation, so worthy of thee. I salute thee, oh peace! oh joy! oh salvation and consolation of the whole world! I salute thee oh greatest of miracles! paradise of delight! secure haven of those who are in danger! fountain of grace! mediatrix of God and men!

PRAYER OF ST. BERNARD.

We raise our eyes to thee, oh queen of the world. After having committed so many sins we must appear before our Judge, and who will appease him? None can do it better than thou, oh blessed Lady, who hast loved him so much, and hast been so tenderly beloved by him. Open thy heart, then, oh mother of mercy, to our sighs and prayers. We fly to thy protection; appease the anger of thy Son, and restore us to his favor. Thou dost not abhor the sinner, however loathsome he may be; thou dost not despise him, if he sends up his sighs to thee, and with contrition asks thy intercession; thou, with thy kind hand, dost deliver him from de-

spair; thou dost encourage him to hope, dost comfort him, and dost not leave him until thou hast reconciled him to his Judge.

Thou art that only one in whom the Saviour found his rest, and with whom he has deposited all his treasures. Hence all the world, oh Mary, honors thy chaste womb, as the temple of God, where the salvation of the world had its beginning. In thee was effected the reconciliation between God and man. Thou art the enclosed garden, oh great mother of God, whose flowers have never been gathered by the sinner's hand. Thou art the beautiful garden, in which God has placed all the flowers which adorn the Church, such as the violet of thy humility, the lily of thy purity, and the rose of thy charity. Who can be compared to thee, oh mother of grace and of beauty? Thou art the paradise of God. From thee hath sprung up the fountain of living water, that waters all the earth. Oh, how many favors hast thou bestowed upon the world, by meriting to be the channel of the waters of salvation!

Of thee the Holy Ghost speaks when he says: Who is she that arises like the dawn, fair as the moon, bright as the sun? Thou art, then, come into the world, oh Mary, as a resplendent dawn, preceding, with the light of thy sanctity, the coming of the Sun of Justice. The day in which thou didst appear in the world may truly be called the day of salvation, the day of grace. Thou art fair as the moon; for as there is no

planet more like the sun, so there is no creature more like God than thou art. The moon illuminates the night with the light which it receives from the sun, and thou dost illuminate our darkness, with the splendor of thy virtues; and thou art fairer than the moon, because in thee is found neither stain nor shade. Thou art bright as the sun, I mean as that Sun which hath created the sun; he has been chosen among all men, and thou among all women. Oh sweet, oh great, oh most lovely Mary, thy name cannot be pronounced by any one that thou dost inflame with thy love; neither can those who love thee think of thee without feeling themselves encouraged to love thee more.

Oh blessed Lady, help our weakness. And who is more fit to speak to our Lord Jesus Christ than thou, who dost enjoy, so near to him, his sweet conversation? Speak, speak, oh Lady, because thy Son listens, and thou wilt obtain from him whatever thou shalt demand.

PRAYER OF ST. GERMANUS.

Oh my only Lady, who art the sole consolation which I receive from God; thou who art the only celestial dew that doth soothe my pains; thou who art the light of my soul when it is surrounded with darkness; thou who art my guide in my journeyings, my strength in my weakness, my treasure in my poverty; balm for my wounds, my consolation in sorrow; thou who art my refuge in misery, the hope of my

salvation, graciously hear my prayer, have pity on me, as is befitting the mother of a God who hath so much love for men. Thou who art our defence and joy, grant me what I ask; make me worthy of enjoying with thee that great happiness which thou dost enjoy in heaven. Yes, my Lady, my refuge, my life, my help, my defence, my strength, my joy, my hope, make me to come with thee to paradise. I know that, being the mother of God, thou canst obtain this for me if thou wilt. Oh Mary, thou art omnipotent to save sinners, thou needest nothing else to recommend us to thee, for thou art the mother of true life.

PRAYER OF THE ABBOT OF CELLES,

SURNAMED THE IDIOT.

Draw me after thee, oh Virgin Mary, that I may run to the odor of thy perfumes. Draw me, for I am held back by the weight of my sins and by the malice of my enemies. As no one goes to thy Son unless the divine Father draws him, so I would dare to say, in a certain sense, that no one goes to him if thou dost not draw him with thy holy prayers. It is thou who teachest true wisdom; thou who dost obtain pardon for sinners, because thou art their advocate. It is thou who dost promise glory to him who honors thee, because thou art the treasurer of graces.

Thou hast found grace with God, oh most

sweet Virgin, because thou hast been preserved from the stain of original sin, filled with the Holy Spirit, and hast conceived the Son of God. Thou hast received all these graces, oh Mary most humble, not only for thyself, but also for us, that thou mayest help us in all our necessities. And thou, indeed, dost so; thou dost succor the good by preserving them in grace; and the bad, by bringing them to receive the divine mercy; thou dost aid the dying by protecting them against the snares of the devil; and thou dost aid them also after death by receiving their souls, and leading them to the kingdom of the blessed.

PRAYER OF ST. METHODIUS.

Thy name, oh mother of God, is full of all graces and divine blessings. Thou hast comprehended him who is incomprehensible, and nourished him who nourishes all living creatures. He who fills heaven and earth and is Lord of all, has chosen to have need of thee, since thou hast clothed him with that garment of flesh that he had not before. Rejoice, oh mother and handmaid of God! rejoice! rejoice! thou hast for a debtor him to whom all creatures owe their being. We are all debtors to God, but God is a debtor to thee. Hence it is, oh most holy mother of God, that thou hast greater goodness and greater charity than all the other saints, and more than all others hast near access in heaven to God, because thou art his mother. Ah, we pray thee that we may

celebrate thy glories, and may know how great is thy goodness, being mindful of us and of our miseries.

PRAYER OF ST. JOHN DAMASCENE.

I SALUTE thee, oh Mary ! thou art the hope of Christians; receive the petition of a servant who tenderly loves thee, especially honors thee, and places in thee all the hope of his salvation. From thee I have life, thou dost restore me to the favor of thy Son; thou art the certain pledge of my salvation. I implore thee, then, to deliver me from the burden of my sins; dispel the darknes of my mind; banish earthly affections from my heart; repel the temptations of my enemies, and so order my life, that I may reach, by thy means and by thy guidance, the eternal felicity of paradise.

PRAYER OF ST. ANDREW OF CANDIA, OR OF JERUSALEM.

I SALUTE thee, oh full of grace! the Lord is with thee. I salute thee, oh cause of our joy, by whom the sentence of our condemnation has been already revoked, and changed into a judgment of benediction. I salute thee, oh temple of the glory of God, sacred house of the King of Heaven. Thou art the reconciliation of God with men. I salute thee, oh mother of our joy. In truth thou art blessed, for thou alone, among all women, hast been found worthy of being the

mother of thy Creator. All nations call thee blessed.

Oh Mary, if I put my confidence in thee I shall be saved; if I am under thy protection I have nothing to fear, for to be thy servant is to have the secure armor of salvation, which God does not grant except to those whom he will save.

Oh mother of mercy, appease thy Son. Whilst thou wast on earth thou didst only occupy a small part of it; but now that thou art raised above the highest heaven, the whole world considers thee as the propitiatory of all nations. We supplicate thee, then, oh holy Virgin, to grant us the aid of thy prayers with God; prayers which are dearer and more precious to us than all the treasures of earth; prayers that render God inclined to forgive our sins; and wilt thou obtain for us abundant graces to receive the pardon of them and to practise virtue? prayers that conquer our enemies, confound their designs, and triumph over their forces.

PRAYER OF ST. ILDEPHONSUS.

I COME to thee, oh mother of God, I supplicate thee to obtain for me the pardon of my sins, and that I may be purified from all the errors of my life. I pray thee to grant me thy grace, that I may unite myself with affection to thy Son and to thee; to thy Son as to my God, to thee as to the mother of my God.

PRAYER OF ST. ATHANASIUS.

HEARKEN oh most holy Virgin, to our prayers, and remember us. Dispense to us the gifts of thy riches, and the abundant graces with which thou art filled. The archangel salutes thee and calls thee full of grace. All nations call thee blessed; the whole hierarchy of heaven blesses thee, and we, who are of the terrestrial hierarchy, also say to thee: "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee;" pray for us, oh mother of God, our Lady and our Queen.

PRAYER OF ST. ANSELM.

WE pray thee, oh most blessed Lady, by that grace which God bestowed on thee when he so greatly exalted thee, rendering all things possible to thee with him; we pray thee to obtain for us that the fulness of grace which thou hast merited may make us to share thy glory. Be pleased, oh most merciful Lady, to procure for us the good for which God consented to become man in thy chaste womb. Be not slow to hear us. If thou wilt deign to supplicate thy Son, he at once will graciously hear thee. It is enough that thou wilt save us, for then we cannot but be saved. Who can restrain the bowels of thy compassion? If thou hast not compassion on us, thou who art the mother of mercy, what will become of us when thy Son shall come to judge us?

Come, then, to our succor, oh most compassion-

ate mother, without regarding the multitude of our sins. Remember again and again that our Creator has taken human flesh from thee, not to condemn sinners, but to save them. If thou hadst been made mother of God only for thine own advantage, it might be said that it would be to thee of little importance whether we were saved or condemned; but God has clothed himself with thy flesh for thy salvation and for that of all men. What will it avail us that thou art so powerful and so glorious, if thou dost not render us partakers of thy felicity? Aid us and protect us; remember the need we have of thy assistance. We recommend ourselves to thee; save us from damnation, and make us serve and love eternally thy Son Jesus Christ.

PRAYER OF ST. PETER DAMIAN.

Holy Virgin, mother of God, succor those who implore thy assistance. Turn to us. But, having been deified, as it were, hast thou forgotten men? Ah, certainly not. Thou knowest in what peril thou hast left us, and the wretched condition of thy servants; no, it is not befitting a mercy so great, to forget so great misery as ours. Turn to us with thy power, because he who is powerful hath given thee omnipotence in heaven and on earth. To thee nothing is impossible, for thou canst raise even the despairing to the hope of salvation. Thou must be compassionate as thou art powerful.

Turn to us, also, in thy love. I know, oh my Lady, that thou art all kindness, and dost love us with a love that no other love can surpass. How dost thou appease the anger of our Judge when he is on the point of punishing us for our offences! All the treasures of the mercy of God are in thy hands. Ah, may it never happen that thou shouldst cease from doing us good: thou seekest but the occasion of saving all sinners, and of bestowing thy mercy upon them; for thy glory increases when, by thy means, penitents are pardoned, and the pardoned come to paradise. Turn, then to us, that we may come to see thee in heaven; for the greatest glory we can obtain next to seeing God, is to see thee, to love thee, and to be under thy protection. Ah, graciously hear us, since thy Son wishes to honor thee, by granting all thy requests.

PRAYER OF ST. WILLIAM, BISHOP OF PARIS.

Oh mother of God, I fly to thee and I implore thee not to cast me off, for the whole Church of the faithful calls thee, and proclaims thee the mother of mercy. Thou art so dear to God, that thou art always graciously heard; thy compassion has never been wanting to any one; thy most gracious condescension has never despised any sinner, however enormous his sin, who has recommended himself to thee. Does the Church falsely and in vain call thee her advocate, and the refuge of the unhappy? No; let my

sins never prevent thee from exercising thy great office of mercy by which thou art the advocate, the mediatrix of reconciliation, the only hope, and the most secure refuge of sinners. Let it never be that the mother, who, for the good of the whole world, brought forth him who is the fountain of mercy, should refuse her mercy to any sinner who has recourse to her. It is is thy office to reconcile God to man; let then thy compassion move thee to help me, for it is greater than all my sins.

PRAYER TO THE MOST HOLY MARY.

TO BE SAID EVERY DAY AT THE END OF THE VISIT.

Oh most holy, immaculate Virgin, and my mother Mary, to thee who art the mother of my Lord, the queen of the world, the advocate, the hope, the refuge of sinners, I, the most miserable of all, have recourse to-day. I adore thee, oh great queen, and thank thee for all the favors thou hast hitherto granted me, especially for having delivered me from hell, which I have so often deserved. I love thee, oh most amiable Lady, and through the love I bear thee promise that I will always serve thee, and do all that I can that thou mayest also be loved by others. I place in thee all my hopes of salvation; accept me for thy servant, and receive me under thy mantle, oh thou mother of mercy. And since thou art so powerful with God, deliver me from all temptations, or obtain for me the strength

to conquer them always until death. From thee I ask a true love for Jesus; from thee I hope to die a good death. Oh, my mother, by the love thou bearest to God, I pray thee always to help me, but most of all at the last moment of my life. Do not leave me until thou seest me actually safe in heaven, blessing thee, and singing thy mercies throughout all eternity. Amen. Thus I hope. Thus may it be.

END OF THE FIRST PART.

THE GLORIES OF MARY.

PART II.

Which treats of her principal Festivals; of her dolors in general, and of each of her seven dolors in particular; of her virtues; and lastly, of devotion to be practised in her honor.

DISCOURSES ON THE SEVEN PRINCIPAL FEASTS OF MARY AND HER DOLORS.

DISCOURSE I.

ON THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF MARY.

How befitting it was to all Three of the Divine Persons that Mary should be preserved from original sin.

The ruin was great which accursed sin brought upon Adam and the whole human race; for when he unhappily lost grace, he at the same time lost the other blessings with which, in the beginning, he was enriched, and drew upon himself, and upon all his descendants, both the displeasure of God, and all other evils. But God ordained that the blessed Virgin should be exempt from this common calamity, for he had destined her to be the mother of the second Adam, Jesus Christ, who was to repair the injury done by the first. Now, let us see how befitting it was that the Three Divine Persons should preserve this Virgin from original sin. We shall see that it was befitting the Father to preserve her from it as his daughter, the Son as his mother, the Holy Spirit as his spouse.

First Point.—In the first place, it was fitting that the eternal Father should create Mary free from the original stain, because she was his daughter, and his first-born daughter, as she

herself attests: "I came out of the mouth of the Most High, the first-born before all creatures;"* for this passage is applied to Mary by the sacred interpreters, by the holy Fathers, and by the Church herself, on the solemn festival of her Conception. Whether she be the first-born on account of her predestination, together with her Son, in the divine decrees, before all creatures, as the school of the Scotists will have it; or the first-born of grace, as predestined to be the mother of the Redeemer, after the prevision of sin, according to the school of the Thomists, all agree in calling her the first-born of God; which being the case, it was not meet that Mary should be the slave of Lucifer, but that she should only and always be possessed by her Creator, as she herself asserts: "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his ways."† Hence Mary was rightly called by Dionysius, Archbishop of Alexandria: One and sole daughter of life: Una et sola filia vitæ;"‡ differing in this from others, who being born in sin, are daughters of death.

Moreover, it was meet that the eternal Father should create her in his grace, since he destined her for the restorer of the lost world, and mediatrix of peace between man and God; and thus the holy Fathers name her, and especially

* Ego ex ore altissimi prodivi primogenita anto omnem creaturam. Eccli. xxiv. 5.

† Dominus possedit me in initio viarum suarum. Prov. viii. 22.

‡ Ep. contr. Pa. Samos.

St. John Damascene, who thus addresses her: Oh blessed Virgin, thou art born to procure the salvation of the whole world!* St. Bernard says that Mary was already prefigured in the ark of Noe; for as by the ark men were saved from the deluge, so by Mary we are saved from the shipwreck of sin; but with this difference, that by means of the ark few only were saved, but by means of Mary the whole human race has been redeemed.† Hence it is that Mary is called by St. Athanasius: The new Eve, the mother of life: Nova Eva, mater vitæ."‡ A new Eve, because the first was the mother of death, but the most holy Virgin is the mother of life. St. Theophanes, Bishop of Nice, exclaims: Hail to thee, who hast taken away the sorrow of Eve.§ St. Basil calls her: the peacemaker between God and men.‖ St. Ephrem: The peacemaker of the whole world.¶

Now, certainly he who treats of peace should not be an enemy of the offended person, still less an accomplice of his crime. St. Gregory says, that to appease the judge his enemy certainly must not be chosen, for instead of appeasing him he would enrage him more. Therefore, as Mary

* In vitam prodiisti, ut orbis universi administram te præberes. Or. 1, de Nat, Virg.

† Sicut per illam homines evaserunt diluvium, sic per istam peccati naufragium. Per illam paucorum facta est liberatio, per istam humani generis salvatio. Serm. de B. Virg.

‡ Or. de S. Deip.

§ Salve quæ sustulisti tristitiam Evæ.

‖ Ave, Dei hominumque sequestra constituta.

¶ Ave totius orbis conciliatrix.

was to be the mediatrix of peace between God and man, there was every reason why she should not appear as a sinner and enemy of God, but as his friend, and pure from sin.

Besides, it was fitting that God should preserve her from original sin, since he destined her to bruise the head of the infernal serpent, who, by seducing our first parents, brought death upon all men, as our Lord predicted: "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed; she shall crush thy head." * Now, if Mary was to be the strong woman brought into the world to crush Lucifer, surely it was not fitting that she should first be conquered by Lucifer, and made his slave, but rather that she should be free from every stain, and from all subjection to the enemy. As he had in his pride already corrupted the whole human race, he would also corrupt the pure soul of this Virgin. But may the divine goodness be ever praised, who prevented her with so much grace, to the end that remaining free from every stain of sin, she could overthrow and confound his pride, as St. Augustine says, or whoever may have been the author of that commentary upon Genesis: As the devil was the head from whence original sin proceeded, that head Mary crushed, because no sin ever entered the soul of the Virgin, and therefore she was free from all stain.† St.

* Inimicitias ponam inter te et mulierem, et semen tuum et semen illius; ipsa conteret caput tuum. Gen. iii. 15.

† Cum peccati originalis caput sit diabolus, tale caput Maria con-

Bonaventure still more clearly expresses the same: It was meet that the blessed Virgin Mary, by whom our shame was to be removed, should conquer the devil, and there she should not yield to him in the least degree.*

But it was especially fitting that the eternal Father should preserve his daughter from the sins of Adam, because he destined her for the mother of his only begotten Son. Thou wast preordained in the mind of God, before every creature, to bring forth God himself made man.† If for no other reason, then, at least for the honor of his Son, who was God, the Father would create her pure from every stain. The angelic Doctor St. Thomas says, that all things ordained by God must be holy, and pure from every defilement.‡ If David, when he was planning the temple of Jerusalem with a magnificence worthy the Lord, said: "Not for man a house is prepared, but for God;"§ now, how much greater cause have we to believe that the great Creator, having destined Mary to be the mother

trivit; quia nulla peccati subjectio ingressum habuit in animam Virginis, et ideo ab omni macula immunis fuit. In Gen. iii. 15.

* Congruum erat ut B. Virgo Maria, per quam aufertur nobis opprobrium, vinceret diabolum, ut nec ei succumberet ad modicum. In 3, dist. 3, art. 2. q. 2.

† Tu ante omnem creaturam in mente Dei præordinata fuisti, ut Deum ipsum hominem procreares. Serm. 15, cap. 4.

‡ Sanctitas illis rebus attribuiter, quæ in Deum sunt ordinatæ. 1. p. q. 36. art. 1.

§ Neque enim homini præparatur habitatio, sed Deo. 1. Par. xxix. 1.

of his own Son, would adorn her soul with every grace, that it might be a worthy habitation for a God. God, the creator of all things, affirms blessed Denis the Carthusian, about to construct a worthy habitation for his Son, adorned her with all pleasing gifts.* And the holy Church herself assures us of this, when she affirms that God prepared the body and soul of the Virgin to be, on earth, a habitation worthy of his only begotten Son. "Omnipotent, eternal God!" thus the holy Church prays, "who, by the co-operation of the Holy Ghost, didst prepare the body and soul of the glorious Virgin mother, that she might become a worthy habitation for thy Son,"&c.†

It is acknowledged to be the greatest glory of sons to be born of noble parents. The glory of children are their fathers: "Gloria filiorum, patres eorum."‡ So that in the world the imputation of small fortune and little science is more endurable than that of low birth; for the poor man may become rich by industry, the ignorant learned by study, but he who is of low birth can hardly become noble; and if ever this occurs, the old and original reproach is liable always to be revived. How can we then believe

* Omnium artifex Deus, filio suo dignum habitaculum fabricaturus, eam omnium gratificantium charismatum copia adornavit. Lib. 2. de Laud. Virg. art. 2.

† Omnipotens sempiterne Deus, qui gloriosæ Virginis et matris Mariæ corpus et animam ut dignum filii tui habitaculum effici mereretur, Spiritu Sancto co-operante præparasti, etc.

‡ Prov. xvii. 6.

that God, when he was able to give his Son a noble mother, by preserving her from sin, would have consented that he should be born of a mother defiled with sin, and permit Lucifer to reproach him with the opprobrium of being born of a mother who once was his slave and an enemy of God! No, the Lord has not permitted this, but he has well provided for the honor of his Son, by ordaining that his mother should always be immaculate, that she might be a fit mother for such a Son. The Greek Church confirms this: "By a singular providence, God ordained that the most holy Virgin should be perfectly pure from the very beginning of her life, as was becoming her who was to be a mother worthy of Christ."*

It is a common axiom among theologians, that no gift has ever been granted to any creature with which the blessed Virgin was not also enriched. St. Bernard thus expresses it: We certainly cannot suspect that what has been bestowed on the chosen among mortals should be withheld from the blessed Virgin.† And St. Thomas of Villanova says: Nothing was ever given to any of the saints that did not shine more pre-eminently in Mary from the beginning of her life.‡ And if it be true, according to the

* Providentia singulari perfecit ut sanctissima Virgo ab ipso vitæ suæ principio tam omnino existeret pura quam decebat illam, quæ Christo digna mater existeret. In Men. die. 25. Martii.

† Quod vel paucis mortalium constat esse collatum, fas certe non est suspicari tantæ Virgini esse negatum. Epist. 174.

‡ Nihil unquam alicui sanctorum concessum est, quod a principio vitæ cumulatius non præfulgeat in Maria. Serm. 2, de Ass.

celebrated saying of St. John Damascene, that there is an infinite distance between the mother of God and the servants of God,* it certainly must be supposed, as St. Thomas teaches, that God has conferred greater graces of every kind on the mother than on the servants.† Now, asks St. Anselm, the great defender of the privileges of the immaculate Mary, this being granted, was the wisdom of God unable to prepare a pure abode for his Son, free from every human stain?‡ Has it been in the power of God, continues St. Anselm, to preserve the angels of heaven unstained amidst the ruin of so many, and could he not preserve the mother of his Son and the queen of angels from the common fall of man?§ Could God, I add, give the grace even to an Eve to come into the world immaculate, and afterwards be unable to bestow it on Mary?

Ah, no, God could do it and has done it, since it was altogether fitting, as the above-named St. Anselm says, that this Virgin, to whom God was to give his only Son, should be adorned with such purity, that it not only should surpass the purity of all men and of all angels, but

* Matris Dei et servorum Dei infinitum est discrimen. Or. 1, de Ass.

† Majora in quovis genere privilegia gratiæ deferenda sunt matri Dei, quam servis. 3, p. q. 27, art. 2.

‡ Impotensne fuit sapientia Dei mundum habitaculum condere, remota omni labe conditionis humanæ? Serm. de Conc.

§ Angelos, aliis peccantibus, a peccato servavit; et matrem ab aliorum peccatis exortem servare non potuit? Loc. cit.

should be second in greatness only to that of God.* And still more plainly does St. John Damascene declare, that he preserved the soul as well as the body of this Virgin, as beseemed her who was about to receive God into her womb, for he being holy, dwells only with the holy.† Thus the eternal Father could say to this beloved daughter: "As the lily among the thorns, so is my love among the daughters."‡ Daughter among all my other daughters, thou art like a lily among thorns; for they are all stained by sin, but thou wert ever immaculate, and ever my friend.

Second Point.—In the second place, it was befitting the Son that Mary, as his mother, should be preserved from sin. It is not permitted to other children to select a mother according to their good pleasure; but if this were ever granted to any one, who would choose a slave for his mother when he might have a queen? who a peasant, when he might have a noble? who an enemy of God, when he might have a friend of God? If, then, the Son of God alone could select a mother according to his pleasure, it must be considered as certain that he would choose one befitting a God. Thus St. Bernard expresses it:

* Decens erat ut ea puritate, qua major sub Deo nequit intelligi, Virgo illa niteret, cui Deus Pater unicum sibi filium dare disponebat. Dict. Lib. de Conc.

† Cum Virginis una cum corpore animam conservasset, ut eam decebat, quæ Deum in sinu suo exceptura erat; sanctus enim ipse cum sit, in sanctis requiescit. Lib. 4, de Fid. Ort. cap. 15.

‡ Sicut lilium inter spinas, sic amica mea inter filias. Cant. ii. 2.

The Creator of men to be born of man must choose such a mother for himself as he knew to be most fit.* And as it was, indeed, fitting that a most pure God should have a mother pure from all sin, such was she created, as St. Bernardine of Sienna says, in these words: The third kind of sanctification is that which is called maternal, and this removes every stain of original sin. This was in the blessed Virgin. God, indeed, created her, by the nobility of her nature as well as by the perfection of grace, such as it was befitting that his mother should be.† And here the words of the apostle may be applied: "For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners,"‡ &c. Here a learned author remarks, that according to St. Paul, it was meet that our Redeemer should not only be separated from sin, but also from sinners, as St. Thomas explains it: It was meet that he who came to take away sins, should be separate from sinners as far as concerns the sin of which Adam was guilty.§ But how could it be said of Jesus Christ that he was

* Nascens de homine factor hominum talem sibi debuit eligere matrem, qualem se decere sciebat. H. 3, Sup. Miss.

† Tertio fuit sanctificatio maternalis, et hæc removet omnem culpam originalem. Hæc fuit in B. Virgine; sane Deus talem tam nobilitate naturæ, quam perfectione gratiæ condidit matrem, qualem eum decebat habere suam matrem. Tom. 2, Serm. 51, c. 1.

‡ Talis enim decebat, ut nobis esset pontifex sanctus, innocens, impollutus segregatus a peccatoribus, etc. Heb. vii. 26.

§ Oportuit eum qui peccata venerat tollere, esse a peccatoribus segregatum quantum ad culpam cui Adam subjacuit. 3, p. q. 4, art. 6, ad. 1.

separate from sinners if his mother was a sinner?

St. Ambrose says: Not from earth, but from heaven, Christ selected this vessel through which he should descend, and consecrated the temple of modesty.* The saint alludes to the words of St. Paul: "The first man was of the earth, earthy: the second man from heaven, heavenly."† St. Ambrose calls the divine mother: *A celestial vessel:* not that Mary was other than earthly in her nature, as heretics have sometimes fancied, but celestial through grace, for she was superior to the angels of heaven in sanctity and purity, as it was meet she should be, when a King of glory was to dwell in her womb; as John the Baptist revealed to St. Bridget: "It was befitting the King of glory to remain in no vessel but one purer and more select than all angels and men;"‡ to which we may add what the eternal Father himself said to the same saint: "Mary was a clean and an unclean vessel. Clean because she was wholly fair, but unclean because she was born of sinners; although she was conceived without sin, that my Son should be born without sin."§ And these last words

* Non de terra, sed de cœlo vas sibi hoc per quod descenderet, Christus elegit, et sacravit templum pudoris. De Inst. Virg. c. 5.

† Primus homo de terra terrenus; secundus homo de cœlo cœlestis. 1 C. xv. 47.

‡ Non decuit regem gloriæ jacere nisi in vase purissimo et electissimo præ omnibus angelis et hominibus. Rev. l. 1, c. 17.

§ Maria fuit vas mundum et non mundum; mundum quia totum pulchra; sed non mundum, quia de peccatoribus nata est, licet sine peccato concepta, ut filius meus de ea sine peccato nasceretur. L. 5, c. 13.

are worthy of note, that Mary was conceived without sin, so that the divine Son might be conceived without sin. Not that Jesus Christ could be capable of contracting sin, but that he might not suffer the opprobrium of having a mother infected with sin, and a slave of the devil.

The Holy Spirit says, that the honor of the Father is the glory of the Son, and the dishonor of the Father is the shame of the Son.* And St. Augustine says, that Jesus preserved the body of Mary from being corrupted after death, since it would have dishonored him if corruption had destroyed that virginal flesh from which he had clothed himself.† Corruption is the reproach of the human condition, from which the nature of Mary was exempted, in order that Jesus might be exempt from it, for the flesh of Jesus is the flesh of Mary. Now, if it were a dishonor for Jesus Christ to be born of a mother whose body was subject to the corruption of the flesh, how much greater would be the shame had he been born of a mother whose soul was corrupted by sin! Moreover, as it is true that the flesh of Jesus is the same as that of Mary, in such a manner (as the saint himself here adds) that the flesh of the Saviour after his resurrec-

* Gloria enim hominis ex honore patris sui, et dedecus filii pater sine honore. Eccli. iii. 13.

† Putredo namque humanæ est opprobrium conditionis, a quo cum Jesus sit alienus, natura Mariæ excipitur; caro enim Jesu caro Mariæ est. Serm. de Ass. B. V.

tion was the very same which he received from his mother;* therefore St. Arnold of Carnotensis says: The flesh of Mary and of Christ is one, and hence I esteem the glory of the Son to be not so much common to both as the same.† Now, this being true, if the blessed Virgin had been conceived in sin, although the Son had not contracted the stain of sin, yet there would always have been a certain stain from the union of himself with flesh once infected by guilt, a vessel of uncleanness and a slave of Lucifer.

Mary was not only the mother, but a worthy mother of the Saviour. Thus all the holy Fathers name her. St. Bernard says: Thou alone hast been found worthy, that in thy virginal hall the King of kings should choose his first mansion.‡ And St. Thomas of Villanova: Before she had conceived she was fitted to be the mother of God.§ The holy Church herself attests that the Virgin merited to be the mother of Jesus Christ.‖ Explaining which passage, St. Thomas of Aquinas remarks, that Mary

* Caro Christi caro est Mariæ, et quamvis gloria resurrectionis fuerit glorificata, eadem tamen mansit quæ de Maria sumpta est. Loc. cit.

† Una est Mariæ et Christi caro; atque adeo filii gloriam cum matre non tam communem judico, quam eamdem. De L. V.

‡ Tu sola inventa est digna, ut in tua virginali aula Rex Regum primam sibi mansionem eligeret. In Depr. ad Virg.

§ Antequam conciperet, jam idonea erat ut esset mater Dei. Serm. 3. de Nat. Virg.

‖ B. Virgo cujus viscera meruerunt portare Christum Dominum. Resp. 1. Noct. 2, in Nat. Mar.

could not merit the incarnation of the Word, but with divine grace she merited such perfection as would render her worthy to become the mother of a God;* as St. Peter Damian also writes: Her singular sanctity merited (out of pure grace) that she should alone be judged worthy to receive a God.†

Now, this being granted, that Mary was a mother worthy of God, what excellency and what perfection, says St. Thomas of Villanova, were befitting her!‡ The same angelic Doctor declares, that when God elects any one to a certain dignity, he also fits him for it; hence, he says, that God having chosen Mary for his mother, certainly rendered her worthy of it by his grace, according to what the angels said to her: "Thou hast found grace with God, behold thou shalt conceive, etc."§ And from this the saint infers that the Virgin never committed any actual sin, not even a venial sin, otherwise, he says, she would not have been a worthy

* B. Virgo dicitur meruisse portare dominum omnium, non quia meruit ipsum incarnari, sed quia meruit ex gratia sibi data illum puritatis et sanctitatis gradum ut congrue posset esse mater Dei. 3 p. q. 2, a 11, ad 3.

† Singularis ejus sanctitas ex gratia hoc promeruit, quod susceptione Dei singulariter judicata est digna. De Ass. Serm. 2.

‡ Quæ autem excellentia, quæ perfectio decuit eam ut esset mater Dei. Serm. 3, Nat. Virg.

§ Beata autem Virgo fuit electa divinitus, ut esset mater Dei; et ideo non est dubitandum, quin Deus, per suam gratiam, eam ad hoc idoneam reddidit, secundum quod Angelus ad eam dicit. Luc. 1, Invenisti gratiam apud Deum; ecce concipies, etc., 3, p. q. 27, a. 4, in corp.

mother of Jesus Christ, since the ignominy of the mother would also be that of the Son, if his mother had been a sinner.* Now, if Mary, by committing only one venial offence, which does not deprive the soul of divine grace, might be said not to have been a worthy mother of God, how much more if she had been stained with original sin, which would have rendered her an enemy of God, and a slave of the devil! Therefore St. Augustine says in a celebrated passage of his writings, that speaking of Mary, he would make no mention of sins, for the honor of that Lord whom she merited for her Son, and through whom she had the grace to conquer sin in every way.†

We should therefore hold it for certain, that the incarnate Word selected for himself a befitting mother, and one of whom he need not be ashamed, as St. Peter Damian expresses it.‡ And also St. Proculus: He inhabited those bowels which he had created, so as to be free from any mark of infamy.§ Jesus felt it no reproach to hear himself called by the Jews the

* Non fuisset idonea mater Dei, si peccasset aliquando, quia ignominia matris ad filium redundasset. Serm. 3, Nat. Virg.

† Excepta itaque S. Virgine Maria, de qua propter honorem Domini nullam prorsus, cum de peccatis agitur, habere volo quæstionem. Inde enim scimus quod ei plus gratiæ collatum fuerit ad vincendum ex omni parte peccatum, quæ concipere et parere meruit eum quem constat nullum habuisse peccatum. De Nat. et grat. contr. Pel. t. 7, c. 36.

‡ Christus talem matrem sibi elegit, qualem moruit habere, de qua non erubesceret.

§ Intra viscera, quæ citra ullam sui dedecoris notam creaverat, habitavit. Or. de Nat. Dom.

son of a poor woman: "Is not his mother called Mary?"* for he came on earth to give an example of humility and patience. But on the other hand, it would doubtless have been a reproach to him if it could have been said by the demons: Was he not born from a mother who was a sinner, and once our slave?† It would be considered most unfit that Jesus Christ should have been born of a woman deformed and maimed in body, or possessed by evil spirits; but how much more unseemly that he should be born of a woman once deformed in soul, and possessed by Lucifer.

Ah, that God who is wisdom itself well knew how to prepare upon the earth a fit dwelling for him to inhabit: "Wisdom hath built herself a house,"‡ "The Most High hath sanctified his own tabernacle." "God will help it in the morning early."§ The Lord, says David, sanctified this his habitation *in the morning early*; that is, from the beginning of her life, to render her worthy of himself; for it was not befitting a God who is holy to select a house that was not holy: Holiness becometh thy house: "Domum tuum decet sanctitudo."‖ And if he himself declares that he will never enter into a malicious

* Nonne mater ejus dicitur Maria? Matth. xiii. 55.

† Nonne mater ejus extitit peccatrix?

‡ Sapientia ædificavit sibi domum. Prov. ix. 1.

§ Sanctificavit tabernaculum suum altissimus . . . . Adjuvabit eam Deus mane diluculo. Psal. xlv. 56.

‖ Psal. xcii. 5.

soul, and into a body subject to sins,"* how can we think that the Son of God would have chosen to inhabit the soul and body of Mary without first sanctifying her and preserving her from every stain of sin? for, as St. Thomas teaches us, the eternal Word inhabited not only the soul, but the body of Mary.† The Church also sings: Oh Lord, thou didst not shrink from the Virgin's womb: "Non horruisti Virginis uterum." Indeed, a God would have shrunk from incarnating himself in the womb of an Agnes, of a Gertrude, of a Theresa, since those virgins, although holy, were for a time, stained with original sin; but he did not shrink from becoming man in the womb of Mary, because this chosen Virgin was always pure from every guilt, and never possessed by the infernal serpent. Hence St. Augustine wrote: The Son of God has built himself no house more worthy than Mary, who was never taken by the enemy, nor robbed of her ornaments.‡

On the other hand, St. Cyril of Alexandria says: Who has ever heard of an architect building a house for his own use and then giving the first possession of it to his greatest enemy?§

* In malevolam animam non introibit sapientia, nec habitabit in corpore subdito peccatis. Sap. i. 4.

† Dei filius in ipsa habitabit, non solum in anima, sed etiam in utero. 3, p. q. 27, a. 4.

‡ Nullam digniorem domum sibi filius Dei ædificavit, quam Mariam, quæ nunquam fuit ab hostibus capta, neque suis ornamentis spoliata.

§ Quis unquam audivit architectum, qui sibi domum ædificavit, ejus occupationem et possessionem primo suo inimico cessisse. In Conc. Eph. n. 6.

Certainly our Lord, who, as St. Methodius declares, gave us the command to honor our parents, would not fail, when he became man, like ourselves, to observe it himself, by bestowing on his mother every grace and honor.* Hence St. Augustine says, that we must certainly believe that Jesus Christ preserved from corruption the body of Mary after death, as it has been said above; for if he had not done so, he would not have observed the law, which, as it commands respect to the mother, so it condemns disrespect.† How much less mindful would Jesus have been of the honor of his mother, if he had not preserved her from the sin of Adam! That Son would, indeed, commit a sin, says Father Thomas d'Argentina, an Augustinian, who, being able to preserve his mother from original sin, should not do so; now that which would be sinful in us, says the same author, cannot be esteemed befitting the Son of God, namely, if he should not have created his mother immaculate when he was able to do so. Ah, no, exclaims Gerson, since thou, the supreme Prince, dost wish to have a mother, honor will certainly be due to her from thee: but this law would not appear well fulfilled if thou shouldst permit her, who was to

* Qui dixit, honora patrem et matrem ut decretum a se promulgatum servaret, omnem Matri gratiam et honorem impendit. Or. in Hypap.

† Sicut honorem matris præcipit ita inhonorationem damnat. Serm. de Ass. B. Virg.

be the dwelling of all purity, to fall into the abomination of original sin.*

Moreover, the divine Son, as we know, came into the world to redeem Mary before all others, as we read in St. Bernardine of Sienna.† And as there are two modes of redeeming, as St. Augustine teaches, one by raising the fallen; the other, by preventing from falling;‡ doubtless, the latter is the most noble. More nobly, says St. Antoninus, is he redeemed who is prevented from falling, than he who is raised after falling;§ because in this way is avoided the injury or stain that the soul always contracts by a fall. Therefore we ought to believe that Mary was redeemed in the nobler manner, as became the mother of a God, as St. Bonaventure expresses it; for Frassen proves the sermon on the assumption to have been written by that holy doctor.‖ We must believe that by a new mode of sanctification the Holy Spirit redeemed her at the first moment of her conception, and preserved her by a special grace from original sin, which was not

* Cum tu Summus Princeps velis habere matrem, illi certe debebis honorem; nimis autem appareret illam legem non bene adimpleri, si in abominationem peccati originalis permitteres illam quæ esse debet habitaculum totius puritatis. Serm. de Conc. B. M.

† Christus plus pro redimenda Virgine venit quam pro omni alia creatura.

‡ Duplex est redimendi modus, unus redimendo lapsum, alter redimendo non lapsum, ne cadat.

§ Nobilius redimitur cui providetur, ne cadat, quam ut lapsus erigatur.

‖ Scot, Acad. tom. 8, art. 3, sect. 3, q. 1, s. 5.

in her, but would have been in her.* On this subject Cardinal Cusano has elegantly written: Others have had a deliverer, but the holy Virgin had a predeliverer;† others have had a Redeemer to deliver them from sin already contracted, but the holy Virgin had a Redeemer who, because he was her Son, prevented her from contracting sin.

In a word, to conclude this point, Hugo of St. Victor says, the tree is known by its fruit. If the Lamb was always immaculate, always immaculate must the mother also have been.‡ Hence this same doctor saluted Mary by calling her: The worthy mother of a worthy Son: "O digna digni." By which he meant to say, that none but Mary was the worthy mother of such a Son, and that none but Jesus was the worthy Son of such a mother.§ Therefore let us say with St. Ildephonsus: Give suck, then, oh Mary, give suck to thy Creator; give suck to him who created thee, and hath made thee so pure and perfect that thou hast merited that he should receive from thee the human nature.‖

* Credendum est enim quod novo sanctificationis genere in ejus conceptionis primordio Spiritus Sanctus eam a peccato originali (non quod infuit, sed quod infuisset) redemit atque singulari gratia preservavit. Serm. 2, de Ass.

† Alii liberatorem, Virgo sancta præliberatorem habuit.

‡ Talis agnus, qualis Mater agni; quoniam omnis arbor ex fructu suo cognoscitur. Coll. 3, de Verb. Inc.

§ O digna digni, formosa pulchri, excelsa altissimi, mater Dei. Ug. de S. Vict. Serm. de Ass.

‖ Lacta, O Maria, Creatorem tuum, lacta eum qui te fecit, et qui talem fecit te, ut ipse fieret ex te. Serm. de Nat. Virg.

Third Point.— If, then, it became the Father to preserve Mary as his daughter from sin, and the Son because she was his mother, it also became the Holy Spirit to preserve her as his spouse. Mary, says St. Augustine, was the only one who merited to be called the mother and spouse of God.* For, as St. Anselm affirms, the Holy Spirit came bodily upon Mary and rested in her, enriching her with grace beyond all creatures, dwelt in her, and made his spouse queen of heaven and of earth.† As the saint expresses it: He was with her really, as to the effect, since he came to form from her immaculate body the immaculate body of Jesus Christ, as the archangel predicted: The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee.‡ For this reason, says St. Thomas, Mary is called the temple of the Lord, the sanctuary of the Holy Spirit, because, by the operation of the Holy Spirit, she was made mother of the incarnate Word.§

Now, if an excellent painter were allowed to choose a bride as beautiful or as deformed as he himself might paint her, how great would be his solicitude to make her as beautiful as possible! Who, then, will say that the Holy Spirit

* Hæc est quæ sola meruit mater, et sponsa vocari. Serm. de Ass.

† Ipse spiritus Dei, ipse amor Patris et Filii corporaliter venit in eam singularique gratia præ omnibus in ipsa requievit, et reginam cœli et terræ fecit sponsam suam. De Exc. Virg c. 4.

‡ Spiritus Sanctus superveniet in te. Luc. i. 35.

§ Unde dicitur templum Domini, sacrarium Spiritus Sancti, quia concepit ex Spiritu Sancto. Opusc. 8.

has not dealt thus with Mary, and that, having it in his power to make this his spouse as beautiful as it became her to be, he has not done so? Yes, thus it was fitting he should do, and thus he did, as the Lord himself attested when praising Mary; he said to her: "Thou art all fair, oh my love; and there is not a spot in thee;"* which words, as we learn from à Lapide, St. Ildephonsus, and St. Thomas, explain as properly to be understood of Mary. St. Bernardine of Sienna,† and St. Lawrence Justinian,‡ also declare that the passage above quoted is precisely to be understood of her immaculate conception; hence the Idiot says: Thou art all fair, oh most glorious Virgin, not in part, but wholly; and the stain of sin, whether mortal, or venial, or original, is not upon thee.§

The Holy Spirit signifies the same thing, when he called this his spouse: "A garden enclosed, a fountain sealed up."‖ Mary, says St. Jerome, was properly this enclosed garden and sealed fountain; for the enemies never entered to harm her, but she was always uninjured, remaining holy in soul and body.¶ And in like manner St. Ber-

* Tota pulchra es, amica mea, et macula non est in te. Cant. iv. 7.

† Tom. 2, Serm. 52. ‡ Serm. de Nat. Virg.

‡ Tota pulchra es, Virgo gloriosissima, non in parte, sed in toto; et macula peccati sive mortalis, sive venialis, sive originalis non est in te. In Contemp. B. V. c. 3.

‖ Hortus conclusus, soror mea sponsa, hortus conclusus, fons signatus. Cant. iv. 12.

¶ Hæc est hortus conclusus, fons signatus ad quam nulli petuerunt doli irrumpere, nec prevalere fraus inimici: sed permansit sancta mente, et corpore. Ep. 10, ad Eust. de Ass.

nard said, addressing the blessed Virgin: Thou art an enclosed garden, where the sinner's hand never entered to rob it of its flowers.*

We know that this divine spouse loved Mary more than all the other saints and angels united, as Father Suarez, St. Lawrence Justinian, and others affirm. He loved her from the beginning, and exalted her in sanctity above all creatures, as David expresses it: "The foundations thereof are in the holy mountains; the Lord loveth the gates of Sion above all the tabernacles of Jacob. . . . This man is born in her, and the Highest himself hath founded her."† All which words signify that Mary was holy from her conception. The same thing is signified by what the Holy Spirit himself says in another place: "Many daughters have gathered together riches; thou hast surpassed them all."‡ If Mary has surpassed all in the riches of grace, she then possessed original justice, as Adam and the angels had it. "There are young maidens without number: one is my dove, my perfect one (the Hebrew reads, my uncorrupted, my immaculate); she is the only one of her mother."§ All just souls

* Hortus conclusus tu es, ad quem deflorandum manus peccatorum nunquam introivit.

† Fundamenta ejus in montibus sanctis; diligit Dominus portas Sion super omnia tabernacula Jacob. . , . Homo natus est in ea et ipse fundavit eam Altissimus. Psal. lxxxvi. 1, 2, 5.

‡ Mutæ filiæ congregaverunt divitias, tu supergressa es universas. Prov. xxxi. 29.

§ Adolescentularum non est numerus. Una est columba mea, perfecta mea, una est matris suæ. Cant. vi. 8.

are children of divine grace; but among these, Mary was the *Dove* without the bitter gall of sin, the *Perfect One* without the stain of original sin, the *one* conceived in grace.

The angel, therefore, before she was the mother of God, already found her full of grace, and thus saluted her: Hail, full of grace: "Ave gratia plena." Commenting upon which words, Sophronius writes, that to the other saints grace is given in part, but to the Virgin it was given in fulness.* So that, as St. Thomas says, grace not only made the soul, but also the flesh of Mary holy, that with it the Virgin might clothe the eternal Word.† Now by all this we are to understand, as Peter of Celles remarks, that Mary, from the moment of her conception, was enriched by the Holy Spirit, and filled with divine grace.‡ Hence, as St. Peter Damian says: She being elected and pre-elected by God, was borne off by the Holy Spirit for himself.§ Borne off, as the saint expresses it, to explain the swiftness of the Divine Spirit, in making her his spouse, before Lucifer should take possession of her.

* Bene gratia plena dicitur, quia cæteris per partes præstatur, Mariæ vero simul se tota infundit plenitudo gratiæ. Serm. de Ass. B. V.

† Anima B. Virginis ita fuit plena quod ex ea refundit gratia in carnem, ut de ipsa conciperet Deum. Opusc. 8.

‡ Simul in ea collecta est gratiæ plenitudo, quia ab exordio suæ conceptionis aspersione Spiritus Sancti tota deitatis gratia est superfusa. Lib. de Panib. cap. 10.

§ A Deo electam et præelectam totam eam rapturus erat sibi Spiritus Sanctus. Serm. de Ann.

I will at length close this discourse, in which I have been more diffused than in the others, because our little congregation has for its principal protectress the most holy Virgin Mary, precisely under this title of her immaculate conception. I will close, I say, by declaring in a few words what are the reasons which make me certain, and which, as I think, should make every one certain of this pious sentiment, so glorious to the divine mother—that she was free from original sin.

There are many doctors who maintain that Mary was even exempt from contracting the debt of sin; such as Cardinal Galatino,* Cardinal Cusano,† De Ponte,‡ Salasar,§ Catherinus,‖ Novarino,¶ Viva,** De Lugo, Egidius, Richelius, and others. Now this opinion is very probable; for if it is true that in the will of Adam, as head of the human race, were included the wills of all, as Gonet,†† Habert,‡‡ and others hold it to be probable, on the testimony of these words of St. Paul: "In whom (Adam) all have sinned."§§ If this, then, is probable, it is also probable that Mary did not contract the debt of sin; for God having greatly distinguished her in the order of grace from the rest of mankind, it should be piously believed, that in the will of Adam, the will of Mary was not included.

* De Arcan. l. 7, c. 18.
† L. 8, Exerc. 8.
‡ Lib. 2, Cant. ex to.
§ De V. Conc. c. 7, s. 7.
‖ De pecc. orig. c. ult.
¶ Umbra. Virg. c. 10, exc. 23.
** P. 8, d. 2, q. 2, a. 3.
†† Man. to. 3, tr. 5, c. 6, s. 2.
‡‡ To. 3, de pecc. c. 7.
§§ Omnes in quo (Ada) peccaverunt. Rom. v.

This opinion is only probable, but I adhere to it, as being more glorious for my Lady. But, then, I hold it for certain that Mary has not contracted the sin of Adam, as Cardinal Everard,* Duval,† Raynauld,‡ Lossada,§ Viva,‖ and many others hold it for certain, and even proximately definable as an article of faith, as they express it. I omit, however, the revelations that confirm this opinion; especially those made to St. Bridget, approved by Cardinal Torrecremata, and by four supreme Pontiffs, and which we read in the sixth book of the above-mentioned revelations, in various places.¶ But I can by no means omit to mention here the opinions of the holy Fathers on this point, in order to prove how uniform they have been in conceding this privilege to the divine mother. St. Ambrose says: Receive me not from Sarah, but from Mary, as an uncorrupted Virgin, a Virgin through grace preserved pure from every stain of sin.** Origen, speaking of Mary, says: Neither was she infected by the breath of the venomous serpent.†† And St. Ephrem: She is immaculate, and remote from every taint of sin.‡‡ St. Augustine, meditating on the words of the angel, "Hail, full of grace," says: By these

* In Exam. Theol. † 1, 2, q. 2, de pecc.
‡ Piet. Lugd. n. 29. § Disc. Th. de Imm. Conc.
‖ Qu. Prod. ad Trut. ¶ C. xii. 49, 55.

** Suscipe me non ex Sara, sed ex Maria, ut incorrupta sit virgo, sed virgo per gratiam ab omni integra labe peccati. Serm. 22, in Psal. cxviii.

†† Nec serpentis venenosi afflatibus infecta est. Hom. 1.

‡‡ Immaculata, et ab omni peccati labe alienissima. Tom. 5, or. ad Dei Gen.

words he shows her to be entirely (note, entirely, excluded from the wrath of the first sentence, and restored to the full grace of benediction.* St. Jerome: That cloud was never in darkness, but always in the light.† St. Cyprian, on Psalm lxxvii., or whoever may be the author of that treatise, says: Neither did justice suffer that vessel of election to be open to common injuries, for, being far exalted above others, she was a partaker of their nature, but not of their sin.‡ St. Amphilochius also says: He who created the first virgin without reproach, also created the second without stain or crime.§ Sophronius: Therefore she is called the immaculate Virgin, because she was in no manner corrupted.‖ St. Ildephonsus: It is certain that she was exempt from original sin.¶ St. John of Damascus: To this paradise the serpent had no entrance.** St. Peter Damian: The flesh of the Virgin, received from

* Ave, gratia plena; quibus ostendit ex integro (nota ex integro) iram primæ sententiæ exclusam, et plenam benedictionis gratiam restitutam. Serm. 11, in Nat. Dom.

† Nubes illa non fuit in tenebris, semper in luce. In Psal. 77.

‡ Nec sustinebat justitia, ut illud vas electionis communibus laxaretur injuriis, quoniam plurimum a cæteris distans natura communicabat non culpa. Lib. de Carn. Christi oper. de Nativ.

§ Qui antiquam virginem sine probro condidit, ipse et secundam sine nota et crimine fabricatus est. Or. de Deip.

‖ Virginem ideo dici immaculatam, quia in nullo corrupta est. In Ep. Ap. Syn. to. 3, p. 307.

¶ Constat eam aboriginali peccato fuisse immunem. Cont. Disp. De Virg. Mar.

** Ad hunc paradisum serpens aditum non habuit. Or. 2, de Nat. Mar.

Adam, was free from Adam's taint of sin.* St. Bruno: This is that uncorrupted earth which the Lord has blessed, and hence she is pure from all contagion of sin.† St. Bonaventure, also: Our Lady was full of preventing grace in her sanctification, namely, of grace preservative against the defilement of original sin.‡ St. Bernardine of Sienna: For it is not to be believed that the Son of God himself would choose to be born of a Virgin, and assume her flesh, if she were defiled in any way with original sin.§ St. Lawrence Justinian: From her conception she was prevented with blessing.‖ So the Idiot, upon those words, Thou hast found grace, "Invenisti gratiam," says: Thou hast found peculiar grace, oh most sweet Virgin, for thou wast preserved from original stain, &c.¶ And many other Doctors express the same.

But there are two arguments which conclusively prove the truth of this opinion. The first is the universal consent of the faithful on

* Caro Virginis ex Adam sumpta, maculas Adam non admisit. Serm. de Ass. V.

† Hæc est incorrupta terra illa, cui benedixit Dominus, ab omni propterea peccati contagione libera. In Psal. ci.

‡ Domina nostra fuit plena gratia præveniente in sua sanctificatione, gratia scilicet præservativa contra fœditatem originalis culpæ, Serm. 2, de Ass.

§ Non enim credendum est, quod ipse filius Dei voluerit nasci ex Virgine, et sumere ejus carnem, quæ esset maculata aliquo originali peccato. Tom. 3, Serm. 49.

‖ Ab ipsa conceptione fuit in benedictionibus præventa. Serm. de Annunt.

¶ Gratiam singularem, O dulcissima Virgo, invenisti, quia fuerunt in te ab originali labe præservatio, etc. C. 6.

this point. Father Egidius, of the Presentation, asserts that all the religious orders follow the same opinion:* and although in the order of St. Dominic, says a modern author, there are ninety-two writers who are of the contrary opinion, yet one hundred and thirty-six are of ours .But what should especially persuade us that our pious opinion is conformable to the common opinion of Catholics, is the declaration of Pope Alexander VII., in the celebrated bull, "Sollicitudo omnium ecclesiarum," issued in the year 1661, namely: "This devotion and worship to the mother of God again increased and was propagated, ...so that the universities having embraced this opinion (that is, the pious one), almost all Catholics embrace it."† And, in fact, this opinion is defended by the universities of the Sorbonne, of Alcala, of Salamanca, of Coimbra, of Cologne, of Mayence, and of Naples, and by many others, in which every one who graduates binds himself by an oath to the defence of the immaculate Mary. The learned Petavius rests his proof of the immaculate conception mainly upon this argument of the common consent of the faithful.‡ Which argument, writes the most learned Bishop Julius Torni, cannot fail to convince; for, in fact, if nothing

* De Præf. Virg. q. 6, a. 4.

† Aucta rursus, et propagata fuit pietas hæc et cultus erga Deiparam . . . ita ut, accedentibus academiis ad hanc sententiam, jam fere omnes Catholici eam complectantur,

‡ Tom. 5, p, 2, l. 14, c. 2, n. 10.

else, the common consent of the faithful renders us certain of the sanctification of Mary in the womb, and of the glorious assumption of her soul and body in heaven ; why, then, should not this same common sentiment render us certain of her immaculate conception?*

By another reason, still stronger than the first, we are assured of the truth of the fact, that the Virgin is exempt from the original stain, namely, the festival instituted by the universal Church in honor of her immaculate Conception. And with regard to this I see, on the one hand, that the Church celebrates the first moment when her soul was created and infused into the body, as Alexander VII. declares in the bull above quoted, in which it is expressed that the Church prescribes the same veneration for the conception of Mary, as the pious opinion concedes to her, which holds her to be conceived without original sin. On the other hand I know it to be certain that the Church cannot honor any thing unholy, according to the decrees of the sovereign pontiffs St. Leo† and St. Eusebius : "In the Apostolic See the Catholic religion has always been preserved pure from stain.‡" And all the theologians, including St. Augustine,§ St. Bernard, and St. Thomas, teach the same thing. The latter makes use of the argument of the festival

* In. adn. ad. Est. l. 2, Dist. 3, s. 2.

† Ep. Decr. 4, c. 2.

‡ In Sede Apostolica extra maculam semper est catholica servata religio. Decr. 24, 9, 1, c. In sede.

§ Serm. 95, et 113.

of her birth, instituted by the Church, to prove that Mary was sanctified before birth; and therefore says: The Church celebrates the nativity of the blessed Virgin; but no feast is celebrated in the Church except in honor of some saint; therefore the blessed Virgin was sanctified in the womb.* Now if it is certain, as the angelic Doctor declares, that Mary was sanctified in the womb, because for this reason the holy Church celebrates her birth; why should we not then hold it for certain that Mary was preserved from original sin from the first moment of her conception, now that we know that in this sense the Church herself celebrates the festival of it?† In confirmation, too, of this great privilege of Mary, it is well known what numerous and remarkable graces our Lord has been pleased to dispense daily in the kingdom of Naples, by means of the little pictures of the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception. I could relate many that took place under the eyes of the fathers of our own congregation; but I will relate only two, which are truly wonderful.

EXAMPLE.

There came a woman to one of the houses of our little congregation, in this kingdom, to tell

* Ep. ad. Can. Lugd.

† Ecclesia celebrat nativitatem B. Virginis; non autem celebratur festum in Ecclesia nisi pro aliquo sancto; Ergo B. Virgo fuit in utero sanctificata. 2, p. q. 27, a. 2.

one of the fathers that her husband had not been to confession for many years, and that she did not know how to bring him back to his duties, for whenever she spoke to him of confession he beat her. The father told her to give him a little picture of Mary immaculate. Evening came, and the woman again begged her husband to go to confession; but the man being as deaf as before, she gave him the picture. He had no sooner received it than he said: "When will you take me to confession, for I am ready?" The wife, at that sudden change, wept for joy. In the morning he came to our church, and when the father asked him how long it was since he had been to confession, he answered: "Twenty-eight years." "And what has brought you to confession this morning?" said the father. "Father," he said, "I was obstinate, but yesterday my wife gave me a picture of the Madonna, and immediately I felt my heart changed, so that last night appeared to me a thousand years long, and I thought the day would never come when I might go to confession." He made his confession with great compunction, changed his life, and continued for a long time to go often to confession to the same father.

In another place, in the diocese of Salerno, during one of our missions, there was a certain man who had a great enmity against one who had offended him. One of our fathers spoke to him, and exhorted him to pardon the offence.

"Father, have you ever seen me at the sermon? No, you have not, and for this reason I stay away: I see that I am damned, but I do not wish it otherwise, I must have revenge." The father made every effort to convert him, but finding that he was wasting his words, "Take," he said to him, "this little picture of the Madonna." "Of what use," said he, "is this picture?" But he took it, and as if he had never refused to pardon his enemy, he said to the missionary, "Father, do you wish anything more than reconciliation? for that I am ready." The next morning was appointed for the reconciliation; but when the morning came, his mind was changed, and he would do nothing. The father offered him another picture. He did not wish for it, and took it unwillingly; but behold, no sooner had he taken it, than he immediately said, "Let us be reconciled: where is Mastrodatti?" He then forgave his enemy, and afterwards made his confession.

PRAYER.

Ah, my immaculate Lady, I rejoice with thee, seeing thee endowed with so great purity. I give thanks, and make the resolution always to give thanks to our common Creator, for having preserved thee from every stain of sin, as I certainly believe; and to defend this great and peculiar privilege of thy immaculate conception I am ready, and swear to give even my life if it is necessary. I wish that all the world might

know thee, and acknowledge thee for that beatiful *aurora*, which was always resplendent with the divine light; that chosen *ark* of salvation, safe from the common shipwreck of sin; for that *perfect and immaculate dove*, as thy divine spouse declared thee; that *inclosed garden*, which was the delight of God; that *fountain sealed up*, which the enemy never entered to trouble; finally, that *spotless lily*, which thou art, springing up among the thorns of the children of Adam; for whereas all are born defiled with original sin, and enemies of God, thou wast born pure, all spotless, and in all things a friend of thy Creator.

Let me, then, also praise thee as thy God himself hath praised thee when he said: Thou art all fair, and there is not a spot in thee: "Tota pulchra es et macula non est in te." Oh most pure dove, all white, all beautiful, and always the friend of God: "O quam pulchra es, amica mea, quam pulchra es." Oh most sweet, most amiable, immaculate Mary, thou who art so beautiful in the eyes of our Lord, do not disdain to look with thy pitying eye upon the loathsome wounds of my soul. Behold me, pity me, and heal me. Oh powerful magnet of hearts, draw also my miserable heart to thee. Thou who even from the first moment of thy life wast pure and beautiful in the sight of God, have pity on me, for I was not only born in sin, but after baptism, I again have defiled my soul with sin. Will God, who hath chosen thee for his

child, his mother, and his spouse, and therefore hath preserved thee from every stain, refuse any grace to thee? Virgin immaculate, you must save me; I will say to thee with St. Philip Neri, make me always to remember thee and do not forget me. It seems to me a thousand years before I shall go to behold thy beauty in paradise, to praise and love thee more, my mother, my queen, my beloved, most lovely, most sweet, most pure, immaculate Mary. Amen.

DISCOURSE II.

ON THE BIRTH OF MARY.

Mary was born a saint, and a great saint; for great was the grace with which our Lord enriched her from the beginning, and great was the fidelity with which Mary at once corresponded with it.

Men are accustomed to celebrate the birth of their children with joy and feasting; but rather ought they to weep and give signs of grief and mourning, considering that these are born, not only destitute of merits and of reason, but moreover infected by sin and children of wrath, and therefore condemned to misery and death. But with reason do we celebrate, with feasts and universal praise, the birth of our infant Mary, for she came into this world an infant in age, it is true, but great in merits and in virtue.

Mary was born a saint, and a great saint. But to conceive the degree of sanctity in which she was born, we must call to mind, in the first place, how great was the first grace with which God enriched Mary; and in the second, with how great fidelity Mary at once corresponded with God.

First Point.—Commencing with the first point, it is certain that the soul of Mary was the most beautiful soul that God ever created; indeed, next to the incarnation of the Word, this work was the greatest and most worthy of himself that the Omnipotent could accomplish in this world—a work, as St. Peter Damian terms it, which God alone excels: "Opus quod solus Deus supergreditur." Hence it was that the divine grace did not descend upon Mary in drops as upon the other saints, but as David predicted: Like rain upon the fleece: "Sicut pluvia in vellus.* The soul of Mary was like wool, that happily imbibed all that great shower of graces without losing a drop. The holy Virgin, says St. Basil, drew into herself all the graces of the Holy Spirit.† Hence she herself said by the mouth of Ecclesiasticus: My abode is in the fulness of saints: "In plenitudine Sanctorum detentio mea;"‡ which St. Bonaventure thus explains: I have in fulness all that the other saints have in part;§ and St. Vincent Ferrer, speaking

* Psal. lxxi. 6.

† Virgo sancta totam sibi hauserat Spiritus Sancti gratiam. In Cat. D. Ph. in 1. Luc. ‡ C. xxiv. 16.

§ Totum teneo in plenitudine quod alii sancti tenent in partes. Serm. 3, de B. V.

especially of the sanctity of Mary before her birth, said, that she surpassed all the saints and angels in sanctity.*

The grace of the blessed Virgin surpassed the grace not only of each saint in particular, but of all the saints and angels together, as the most learned Father Francis Pepe, of the Society of Jesus, proves, in his admirable work on the grandeur of Jesus and Mary;† and he asserts that this opinion, so glorious for our queen, is now common and established among modern theologians, as Carthagena, Suarez, Spinelli, Recupito, Guerra, and others, who have avowedly examined it, which was not done by the ancients; and he further relates, that the divine mother sent Father Martin Guttierez to thank Father Suarez in her name for having, with so much courage, defended this most probable opinion, which Father Segneri asserts, in his work entitled "The Servant of Mary," was maintained by the common consent of the Faculty of Salamanca.

Now if this opinion is universal and certain, the other opinion is also very probable, namely, that Mary received from the first moment of her immaculate conception this grace, superior to the grace of all the saints and angels together. This the same Father Suarez powerfully defends, and Father Spinelli, Recupito,‡ and Colombiere,§ follow him. But besides the au-

* Virgo sanctific ata fuit in utero super omnes sanctos et angelos.
† Tom. 3, Lez. 136. ‡ Ap. P. Pepe. Loc. cit. § Serm. 2.

thority of theologians, there are yet two great and convincing reasons sufficient to prove the above-mentioned opinion. The first reason is, that Mary was chosen by God to be the mother of the divine Word, hence blessed Denis the Carthusian says, that having been elected to an order superior to all creatures (for in a certain sense the dignity of mother of God, as Father Suarez affirms, belongs to the order of the hypostatic union), gifts of a superior order were justly bestowed upon her from the beginning of her life, so that her graces far exceeded those granted to all other creatures. And, indeed, it cannot be doubted, that at the same time, when in the divine decrees the person of the eternal Word was predestined to become man, a mother was also destined for him, from whom he was to take the human nature, and this was our infant Mary. Now St. Thomas teaches that the Lord gives to every one grace proportioned to that dignity for which he destines him;* St. Paul taught this before, when he said: "Who also hath made us fit ministers of the New Testament;"† signifying to us that the Apostles received from God gifts proportioned to the great office to which they were elected. St. Bernardine of Sienna adds, that when a man is chosen by God for any state, he not only receives the dispositions requisite for that, but also the gifts

* Unicuique a Deo datur gratia, secundum hoc ad quod eligitur. 3, p. q. 27, a. 5, ad. 1.

† Qui et idoneos nos fecit ministros Novi Testamenti. 2 Cor. iii. 6.

necessary to fill the office in a becoming manner.* Now if Mary was chosen to be mother of God, it was meet that God should adorn her, even from the first moment, with an immense grace, and of an order superior to the grace of all other men and angels; it being requisite that the grace should correspond with the most high and immense dignity to which God exalted her; in which opinion all theologians agree with St. Thomas, who says: The Virgin was elected to be the mother of God, and therefore there can be no doubt that God, by his grace, rendered her fit for it.† Hence Mary, before being made mother of God, was adorned with a sanctity so perfect, that it rendered her fit for this great dignity. In the blessed Virgin, therefore, says the holy doctor, was a perfection, as it were preparative, by which she was fitted to become the mother of Christ; and this was the perfection of sanctification.‡

And St. Thomas had before said, that Mary was called full of grace, not on account of the degree of grace, since she had not grace in its highest possible degree; for even the habitual grace of Jesus Christ (as the same doctor says)

* Regula firma est in sacra theologia, quod quandocumque Deus aliquem eligit ad aliquem statum, omnia bona illi dispenset, quæ illi statui necessaria sunt et illum copiose decorant. Serm. 10, a 2, c. 1.

† Virgo fuit electa, ut esset mater Dei, et ideo non est dubitandum quia Deus per suam gratiam eam ad hoc idoneam reddidit. Loc. cit. art. 4.

‡ In B. Virgine fuit perfectio quasi dispositiva, per quam reddebatur idonea ad hoc quod esset mater Christi; et hæc fuit perfectio sanctificationis. Cit. q. 27. a. 5, ad 2.

was not the highest possible, so that God, by his absolute power, could not make it greater; although it was grace sufficient to correspond to the end for which his humanity was destined by the divine Wisdom, that is, for the union with the person of the Word.* The divine power, although it may form something greater and better than the habitual grace of Christ, yet could make nothing that should be destined to any thing greater than the personal union of the only begotten Son of the Father, to which union such a measure of grace would sufficiently correspond, according to the idea of divine wisdom.†

The same angelic Doctor teaches, that the divine power is so great, that however much it gives, there always remains something more to give; and although the natural power of the creature in receiving is in itself limited, so that it can be entirely filled, yet the power of its obedience to the divine will is unlimited, and God can always increase its fulness by making it more capable of receiving;‡ and hence, to return to our proposition, St. Thomas declares, that the blessed Virgin, although not full of grace, in re-

* 3, p. q. 7, a. 10, ad 1.

† Virtus divina, licet possit facere aliquid majus et melius, quam sit habitualis gratia Christi; non tamen posset facere quod ordinaretur ad aliquid majus quam sit unio personalis ad filium unigenitum a Patre, cui unioni sufficienter correspondet talis mensura gratiæ, secundum definitionem divinæ sapientiæ. D. q. 7, a. 12, ad 2.

‡ Potentiam naturalem ad recipiendum posse totam impleri, non autem potentiam obedientiæ. S. Th. q. 29, de Verit. a. 3, ad 3.

spect to absolute grace; yet is called full of grace in respect to herself, since she possessed a grace immense, sufficient, and corresponding to her great dignity, which rendered her fit to become the mother of a God.* Hence the blessed Fernandez says, that the measure by which we can know how great was the grace communicated to Mary is her dignity as mother of God.†

Justly, then, did David say, that the foundations of this city of God, Mary, should be laid upon the summits of the mountains: "Fundamenta ejus in montibus sanctis;" ‡ by which we are to understand that the beginning of the life of Mary was more exalted than the completed lives of all the saints put together. "The Lord loveth the gates of Sion," the prophet continues, "above all the tabernacles of Jacob." § And David himself gave this as the reason, namely, that God was to make himself man in her virginal womb: Man was born in her: "Homo natus est in ea." Hence it was fitting that God should give to this Virgin, even from the first moment

* Beata Virgo est plena gratia, non ex parte ipsius gratiæ; quia non habuit gratiam in summa excellentia qua potest haberi, nec ad omnes effectus gratiæ; sed dicitur fuisse plena gratia per comparationem ad ipsam; quia scilicet habebat gratiam sufficientem ad statum illum, ad quem erat a Deo electa, ut esset mater unigeniti ejus. D. q. 7, a. 10, ad 1.

† Et igitur dignitas matris Dei regula, per quam metiendum, quicquid Virgini ab eo collatum credimus.

‡ Psal. lxxxvi. 1.

§ Diligit Dominus portas Sion super omnia tabernacula Jacob. xxxvi. 2.

he created her, a grace corresponding with the dignity of the mother of God.

Isaias foretold the same when he said, that in future the mountain of the house of the Lord, which was the blessed Virgin, should be prepared on the summit of all the other mountains, and therefore all the nations must hasten to this mountain, to receive the divine favors.* St. Gregory explains this by saying: Yea, the mountain on the top of mountains, because the glory of Mary shone above that of all the saints.† And as St. John Damascene expresses it: The mountain which it pleased God to choose for his habitation.‡ Mary was called a cypress, but a cypress of Mount Sion: she was also called a cedar, but a cedar of Lebanon; an olive-tree, but a fair olive-tree; chosen, but chosen as the sun; for, as the sun, says St. Peter Damian, with his light so far exceeds all the splendor of the stars, that they are seen no more when he appears, so the great Virgin Mary surpasses, with her sanctity, the merits of the whole celestial court.§ And as St. Bernard elegantly expresses it: Mary was so sublime in sanctity, that none but Mary was a fitting mother of God.

* Et erit in novissimis diebus præparatus mons domus Domini in vertice montium, et elevabitur super colles, et fluent ad eum omnes gentes. Isa. ii. 2.

† Mons quippe in vertice montium, quis altitudo Mariæ super omnes sanctos refulsit. L. 1, in 1, Reg. c. v.

‡ Mons in quo beneplacitum est Deo habitare in eo.

§ Siderum rapit positionem, ut sint quasi non sint; sic Virgo meæ ita singulorum et omnium antecedit. Serm. de Ass.

And no other Son than God was befitting Mary.*

The second argument which proves that Mary, in the first moment of her life, was more holy than all the saints united, is founded upon the great office which she had from the beginning, of mediatrix of men; for which it was requisite that she should possess a greater treasure of grace than the whole human race together. It is very well known how universally this title of mediatrix is applied by theologians and by the very holy Fathers to Mary, since by her powerful intercession and merits *de congruo* she has obtained salvation for all, procuring for the ruined world the great blessing of redemption. It is said by merit *de congruo*, because Jesus Christ alone is our mediator by way of justice, and by merit *de condigno*, as it is expressed by the schools, he having offered to the eternal Father his merits, which he has accepted for our salvation. Mary, on the contrary, is the mediatrix of grace by way of simple intercession, and of merit *de congruo*, she having offered to God, as the theologians say with St. Bonaventure, her merits for the salvation of all men; and God, through grace, has accepted them in union with the merits of Jesus Christ. Hence Arnold Carnotensis says: She effected our salvation in common with Christ.† And Richard of St. Victor,

* Neque enim decebat Deum alia mater quam Virgo neque Virginem alius filius quam Deus.

† Ipsa in nostra salute communem cum Christo effectum obtinuit.

also: She desired, sought, and obtained the salvation of all; nay, more, the salvation of all was effected through her.* So that every blessing and every gift of eternal life which each of the saints has received from God, has been obtained for them by Mary.

And it is this which the holy Church wishes us to understand, when she honors the divine mother by applying to her these passages of Ecclesiasticus: In me is all grace of the way and of the truth: "In me gratia omnis viæ et veritatis." † It is said: *Of the way*, because through Mary all graces are dispensed to those who are still on the road to heaven: *Of the truth*, because through Mary is given the light of truth. In me is all hope of life and of virtue: "In me omnes spes vitæ et virtutis." ‡ Of life, because through Mary we hope to attain the life of grace upon earth, and of glory in heaven; and of virtue, because through Mary virtue is obtained, and especially the theological virtues, which are the principal virtues of the saints. I am the mother of fair love, and of fear, and of knowledge, and of holy hope.§ Mary by her intercession obtains for her servants the gifts of divine love, of holy fear, of celestial light, and of holy confidence. And St. Bernard infers that

* Omnium salutem desideravit, quæsivit, obtinuit; imo omnium salus per ipsam effecta. C. 26, in Cant.

† C. xxiv. 25. ‡ Ibid.

§ Ego mater pulchræ dilectionis, et timoris, et agnitionis, et sanctæ spei.

it is taught by the Church, that Mary is the universal mediatrix of our salvation. "Extol the finder of grace, the mediatrix of salvation, the restorer of ages." Thus the Church sings of her to me, and hath taught me to sing the same.*

Therefore, as St. Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem, asserts, the archangel Gabriel called her full of grace: "Ave gratia plena;" because whilst to others, as the saint above mentioned remarks, limited grace is given, to Mary it was given in fulness.† And thus it was ordered, as St. Basil attests, that in this way she might become the worthy mediatrix between God and men.‡ For if the Virgin had not been full of divine grace, as St. Lawrence Justinian adds, how could she be the ladder of paradise, the advocate of the world, and the true mediatrix between God and men?§

The second argument is now made perfectly clear: If Mary, even from the beginning, as already destined to be the mother of the common Redeemer, received the office of mediatrix of all men, and consequently also of all the saints, it was requisite that she, from the beginning,

* Magnifica gratiæ inventricem, mediatricem salutis, restauratricem sæculorum. Hæc mihi de illa cantat Ecclesia, et me eadem docuit decantare. Epist. 175, ad Canonic. Lugd.

† Bene plena, quia cæteris sanctis datur gratia per partes; Mariæ vero tota se infudit plenitudo gratiæ. Serm. de Ass.

‡ Ave gratia plena, propterea Deum inter et homines mediatrix intercedens.

§ Quomodo non est Maria plena gratia, quæ effecta est paradisi scala, interventrix mundi, Dei atque hominum verissima mediatrix. Serm. de ann. B. V.

should have a greater grace than all the saints had, for whom she was to intercede. To explain myself more clearly, if by means of Mary all men were to render themselves dear to God, it was meet that Mary should be more holy and more dear to God than all other men united. Otherwise, how could she intercede for all others? In order that an intercessor may obtain from his prince favor for all his vassals, it is absolutely necessary that he, more than all the other vassals, should be dear to his monarch. And Mary, therefore, concludes St. Anselm, merited to be the worthy restorer of the ruined world, because she was the most holy and most pure of all creatures.*

Mary was, then, the mediatrix of men, some one will say, but can she be called also the mediatrix of angels? Many theologians are of opinion that Jesus Christ obtained by his merits the grace of perseverance also for the angels; so that as Jesus Christ was their mediator *de condigno*, Mary may also be called their mediatrix *de congruo*, having hastened by her prayers the coming of the Redeemer. At least, having merited *de congruo* to be chosen for the mother of the Messias, she merited for the angels the restoration of their seats which had been lost by the demons. Then, at least, she merited for them this accidental glory; hence, Richard of

* Pura sanctitas pectoris ejus, omnis creaturæ puritatem, sanctitatemque transcendens, promeruit ut reparatrix perditi orbis dignissima fieret. De Excell. Virg. c. 9.

St. Victor says: Every creature by her is restored, the ruin of the angels by her is repaired, and human nature is reconciled.* And St. Anselm before had said: All things by this Virgin are reclaimed and restored to their pristine state.†

So that our heavenly child, because she was appointed mediatrix of the world, as well as predestined for the mother of the Redeemer, even from the first moment of her life, received grace greater than that of all the saints united. Hence how lovely in the sight of heaven and earth was the beautiful soul of that happy infant, although still inclosed in the womb of its mother! In the eye of God she was the creature most worthy of love, because, already full of grace and of merit, she could, even at that time, exult and say: When I was a little child I pleased the Most High: "Cum essem parvula, placui Altissimo." And at the same time she was the creature most full of love for God that until that time had appeared in this world; so that Mary, had she been born immediately after her most pure conception, would have come into the world more rich in merits, and more holy, than all the saints united. Now, let us consider how much more holy she was at her birth, coming to the light after the acquisition of those merits which she made

* Utraque creatura per hanc reparatur, et angelorum ruina per hanc restaurata est, et natura humana reconciliata. In Cant. 4.

† Cuncta per hanc Virginem in statum pristinum revocata sunt et restaurata. De Exc. Virg. c. 11.

during the nine months that she remained in her mother's womb. Let us now go on to consider the second point, namely: how great was the fidelity with which Mary at once corresponded with the divine grace.

Second Point.—It is not now an individual opinion of some few divines, says a learned author,* it is the opinion of the whole world, that the holy infant, when she received sanctifying grace in the womb of St. Anna, received at the same time the perfect use of reason, with a great divine light corresponding to the grace with which she was enriched. Hence we may believe, that from the first moment when her pure soul was united to her most pure body, she was enlightened with divine wisdom to comprehend eternal truths, the beauty of virtue, above all, the infinite goodness of her God, and how much he deserves to be loved by all men, but especially by her, on account of the peculiar graces with which he had adorned her and distinguished her from all creatures, preserving her from the stain of original sin, bestowing on her a grace so abundant, and destining her for the mother of the Word and the queen of the universe.

Hence Mary, from that moment grateful to her God, began to effect all that she could, using faithfully all that great treasure of grace that she had received; and wholly applying herself to please and love the divine goodness. From that moment she loved him with all her

* Father La Colombiere. Serm. 31.

strength, and thus continued to love him through all those nine months that she lived before her birth, in which she did not cease for a moment to unite herself to God by fervent acts of love. She was free from original sin, and therefore she was also exempt from every earthly attachment, from every irregular tendency, from every distraction, from all strife of the senses, which could have prevented her from advancing constantly in the divine love. All her senses united with her blessed spirit in drawing her near to God. Hence her pure soul, freed from every hindrance, without lingering, always rose to God, always loved him, and always increased in love to him. Therefore she called herself a plane-tree planted by the waters: "Quasi platanus exaltata sum juxta aquam;"* for she, indeed, was that noble tree of God that always grew beside the stream of divine grace. She also called herself a vine: As the vine I have brought forth a pleasant odor: "Ego quasi vitis fructificavi suavitatem odoris;"† not only because she was so humble in the eyes of the world, but also because, as the vine never ceases to grow: "Vitis nullo fine crescit:" according to the Proverb, so the most holy Virgin always increased in perfection. The growth of other trees, as the orange, mulberry, pear, &c., is determinate, but the vine always increases, and increases in proportion to the height of the tree by which it is supported. Hail, oh vine, always vigorous! thus St. Gregory

* Eccli. xxiv. 19. † Eccli. xxiv. 23.

Thaumaturgus salutes her;* for she was always united to her God, who was her only support. Thus it was of her that the Holy Spirit spoke when he said: Who is this that cometh up from the desert flowing with delights, leaning on her beloved?† Commenting on this, St. Ambrose says: Who is that, accompanied by the divine Word, increases like the vine supported by a lofty tree?‡

Many grave theologians teach, that the soul which possesses a habit of virtue, whenever she corresponds faithfully with the actual graces which she afterwards receives from God, always produces an act equal in intensity to the habit she possesses; so that each time she acquires a new and double merit, equal to the aggregate of all the merits before acquired. This increase, as they say, was granted to the angels in the time of their probation; and if it were granted to the angels, who shall say that it was not also given to the divine mother while she lived on this earth, but especially in the time of which I am speaking, when she remained in the womb of her mother, and was certainly more faithful than the angels, in corresponding with grace? Mary, then, during all that time was redoubling continually that sublime grace, which from the first moment she possessed; for, corresponding

* Serm. 1, in Ann.

† Quæ est ista, quæ ascendit de deserto deliciis affluens, innixa super dilectum suum? Cant. viii. 5.

‡ Hoc est quæ ascendit, ita ut inhæret Dei Verbo, sicut vitis propago? Ap. Seg. Pred. 40, dell' Ann.

with all her power and perfection in every act she performed, at every successive moment she redoubled her merits. Hence, if, in the first moment, she had received a thousand degrees of grace, in the second she had two thousand, in the third four thousand, in the fourth eight thousand, in the fifth sixteen thousand, in the sixth thirty thousand; and yet we have only reached the sixth moment. But multiply in this way for a whole day, multiply for nine months, and consider, what treasures of grace, of merits, and of sanctity Mary brought into the world when she was born.

Let us rejoice, then, with our infant, who was born so holy, so dear to God, and so full of grace; and let us rejoice not only for her, but also for ourselves, since she came into the world full of grace, not only for her own glory, but for our good. St. Thomas says the most holy Virgin was full of grace in three ways: 1st, She was full of grace in soul, so that from the beginning her holy soul belonged entirely to God. 2d, She was full of grace in body, so that she merited to clothe the eternal Word with her pure flesh. 3d, She was full of grace for the common benefit, so that all men might share it.* Some saints, adds the angelic Doctor, have so much grace, that not only is it enough for themselves but also to save many others, not, however, all men; only to Jesus Christ and Mary was given so great a grace that it was sufficient

* Fuit etiam gratia plena quantum ad refusionem ad omnes homines.

to save all men. If any one had enough for the salvation of all, that would be the greatest; and this was in Jesus Christ and the blessed Virgin.* Thus St. Thomas writes. Hence what St. John said of Jesus—"And of his fulness we all have received"†—the saints say of Mary. St. Thomas of Villanova says: Full of grace, of whose fulness all receive.‡ Therefore St. Anselm remarks, there is no one who does not share in the grace of Mary.§ And is there any one in the world to whom Mary is not merciful, and on whom she does not bestow some favor?‖ From Jesus, however (we should understand), we receive grace as from the author of grace, from Mary as the mediatrix: from Jesus as the Saviour, from Mary as the advocate: from Jesus as the fountain, from Mary as the channel.

Therefore St. Bernard says that God has established Mary as the channel of the mercies which he wishes to dispense to men; and for this reason he filled her with grace, that every one might receive his portion of her fulness. A full channel, that all might partake of its fulness, but not receive the fulness itself.¶ Hence the saint exhorts all to consider with how

* Sed quando quis haberet tantum, quod sufficeret ad salutem omnium, hoc esset maximum; et hoc fuit in Christo et beata Virgine. Opusc. 8.

† Et de plenitudine ejus nos omnes accepimus. C. 1. 16.

‡ Gratia plena, de cujus plenitudine accipiunt universi.

§ Ita ut nullus sit, qui de plenitudine gratiæ Virginis non sit particeps.

‖ Quis unquam reperitur cui Virgo propitia non sit? Quis ad quem ejus misericordia non se extendat?

¶ Plenus aquæductus, ut accipiant cæteri de plenitudine, sed non plenitudinem ipsam.

much love God will have us honor this great Virgin, since in her he has placed all the treasure of his blessings; that whatever we possess of hope, grace, and salvation, we may thank our most loving queen for it; since it all comes to us through her hands, and by her intercession.* Miserable is that soul who closes for herself this channel of grace, by neglecting to recommend herself to Mary! When Holophernes wished to make himself master of the city of Bethulia, he ordered the aqueducts to be destroyed: "And he commanded their aqueduct to be cut off."† And this the devil does when he wishes to make himself master of a soul, he makes her abandon the devotion to the most holy Mary. When this channel is closed, she will at once lose the light and the fear of God, and finally eternal salvation. By the following example it will be seen how great is the compassion of the heart of Mary, and the ruin which he brings upon himself who closes this channel, and abandons devotion to this queen of heaven.

EXAMPLE.

It is narrated by Tritemius, Canisius, and others, that in Magdeburg, a city of Saxony, there was a certain man named Udo, who, from his youth, had been so destitute of talent that

* Intueamini quanto devotionis affectu a nobis eam voluerit honorari, qui totius boni plenitudinem posuit in Maria; ut proinde si quid spei nobis est, si quid gratiæ, si quid salutis, ab ea noverimus redundare. Serm. de Aquæd.

† Incidi præcepit aquæductus illorum. Judith vii. 6.

he was the ridicule of all his school-fellows. Now one day, being more than usually disheartened, he went to pray to the most holy Virgin before her image. Mary appeared to him in a dream, and said to him: "Udo, I will console you, and not only will I obtain from God for you abilities which will protect you from derision, but even talents which will make you admired; and moreover, after the death of the bishop, I promise that you shall be elected in his place." Thus Mary said, and thus it came to pass. Udo made great progress in the sciences, and obtained the bishopric of that city. But Udo was so ungrateful to God and to his benefactress for these favors, that he neglected all his devotions and became the scandal of the place. Whilst he was in bed one night with a wicked companion, he heard a voice saying to him: "Udo, cease this sinful pastime; you have sinned enough."* At first he was irritated by these words, thinking it was some one who was reproving him; but hearing it repeated a second and a third night, he began to tremble a little, lest it should be a voice from heaven. Notwithstanding all this, he continued in his wickedness. But after God had given him three months for repentance, behold the punishment! One night a devout canon, named Frederick, was praying, in the church of St. Maurice, that God would remove the scandal which Udo gave; when, behold, the door of the church was burst

* Udo cessa de ludo; lusisti satis; Udo.

open by a strong wind. Two youths entered with lighted torches in their hands, and stood on each side of the high altar. Then two others followed, who spread before the altar a carpet, and placed upon it two thrones of gold. Another youth, in military attire, followed, with a sword in his hand, and stopping in the midst of the church, cried: "Oh ye saints of heaven, whose relics are preserved in this church, come to assist at the great justice which the sovereign Judge is about to execute." At these words many saints appeared, and also the twelve apostles, as assistants in this judgment. Lastly, Jesus Christ entered, and seated himself on one of these thrones. Afterwards Mary appeared, attended by many holy virgins, and seated herself on the other throne at the side of her Son. The Judge now ordered that the culprit should be brought forward, and he was the miserable Udo. St. Maurice spoke, and demanded, in the name of the people whom he had scandalized, justice for his infamous life. All present raised their voices and said: "Oh Lord, he merits death." "Let him die, then," said the eternal Judge. But before the sentence was executed (see how great is the mercy of Mary) she, the kind mother, that she might not be present at that tremendous act of justice, left the church; and then the heavenly minister, who entered among the first, with the sword, approaching Udo, with one blow severed the head from the body, and the vision vanished. The place

was left dark. The canon, trembling, went for a light from a lamp which was burning under the church; and when he returned, saw the body of Udo with the head cut off, and the pavement all covered with blood. When daylight came, the people thronged the church, and the canon related the whole vision and the circumstances of that fearful tragedy. And on the same day the wretched Udo, who was condemned to hell, appeared to one of his chaplains, who knew nothing of what had taken place in the church. The body of Udo was thrown into a marsh, and his blood remained for a perpetual memorial on that pavement, which was always covered with a carpet; and from that time it became the custom to uncover it when a new bishop took possession of the church, that at the sight of such a punishment he might be mindful to lead a good life, and not be ungrateful for the graces of the Lord and of his most holy mother.

PRAYER.

Oh holy and heavenly infant Mary! thou who art the destined mother of my Redeemer and the great mediatrix of miserable sinners, have pity on me. Behold at thy feet another ungrateful creature who has recourse to thee and implores thy mercy. It is true that, for my ingratitude towards God and thee, I am deserving of being abandoned by God and by thee; but I have been told, and thus I believe, knowing how great is thy compassion, that thou wilt not re-

fuse to help him who, with confidence, recommends himself to thee. Thou, oh most exalted of all creatures, since there is no one above thee but God, and, in comparison with thee, the greatest in heaven are but small; oh saint of saints, oh Mary, abyss of grace, full of grace, help a miserable sinner who has lost it by his own fault. I know that thou art so dear to God that he denies thee nothing. I know also that thou dost rejoice to employ thy greatness in relieving the distressed. Ah, make known how great is thy favor with God by obtaining for me a divine light and a flame so powerful that it may change me from a sinner into a saint, and, detaching me from every earthly affection, may wholly inflame me with divine love. Do this, oh Lady, because thou canst do it; do this for the love of that God who has made thee so great, so powerful, and merciful. Thus I hope. Amen.

DISCOURSE III.

ON THE PRESENTATION OF MARY.

The offering which Mary made of herself to God was prompt, without delay; entire, without reserve.

THERE never has been, and there never will be, any offering of a pure creature greater and more perfect than that which Mary made to God, being yet only a child of three years, when

she presented herself in the temple to offer him, not spices, nor calves, nor talents of gold, but her whole self as a perfect holocaust, consecrating herself as a perpetual victim in his honor. Well did she understand the voice of God, which even then called her to dedicate herself wholly to his love, with these words: Arise, make haste, my love, and come: "Surge, propera, amica mea, et veni."* And therefore her Lord would have her from thenceforth forget her country, her parents, and every thing, to attend to nothing but to love and please him: "Hearken, oh daughter, and see and incline thy ear; and forget thy people and thy father's house."† And she at once obeyed promptly the divine voice. Let us consider, then, how acceptable to God was this offering which Mary made of herself, as she presented herself promptly and entirely to him; promptly without delay; entirely without reserve; these are the two points.

First Point.—Mary offered herself to God promptly. From the first moment when this heavenly infant was sanctified in the womb of her mother (which was at the first moment of her immaculate conception), she received the perfect use of reason, that she might from thenceforth begin to merit, as the Doctors universally agree; and one of them, Father Suarez, says, that as the most perfect mode by which

* Cant. ii. 10.

† Audi, filia, et vide, et inclina aurem tuam; et obliviscere populum tuum, et domum patris tui. Psal. xliv. 11.

God sanctifies a soul is its sanctification by its own merits, as St. Thomas teaches,* so it is to be believed that the blessed Virgin has been thus sanctified.† And if this privilege was granted to the angels and to Adam, as the angelic Doctor says,‡ much more should we believe that it was granted to the divine mother, on whom we cannot doubt that God, having deigned to make her his mother, conferred greater gifts than on all other creatures, as the same Doctor teaches. From her he received his human nature, hence before all others she must have obtained from Christ the fulness of grace ;§ for, being mother, as Father Suarez says, she has a certain peculiar right to all the gifts of her Son.‖ And as, by the hypostatic union, Jesus must of right have the fulness of all graces; thus by the divine maternity, it was meet that Jesus should confer on Mary, as a natural debt, greater graces than those bestowed on all the other saints and angels.

Thus, from the beginning of her life, Mary knew God, and knew him so well, that no tongue, as the angel declared to St. Bridget, shall suffice to tell how the intellect of the holy Virgin clearly saw God in the first moment she knew him.¶ And even in that first moment of

* 3 p. q. 19, a. 3.

† Sanctificari per propium actum est perfectior modus. Ergo credendum est hoc modo fuisse sanctificatam Virginem. To. 2, in 3 p. D. 4, 5, 8.

‡ 1 p. q. 63, a. 5, et q. 95, a. 2.

§ Ex ea accepit humanam Naturam, et ideo præ cæteris majorem debuit a Christo gratiæ plenitudinem obtinere. 3 p. q. 27, a. 5.

‖ Unde fit ut singulare jus habeat ad dona filii sui. T. 2, in 3, p. D. 1, 5, 2.

¶ Serm. Aug. c. 14.

light by which she was illuminated, she offered herself wholly to her Lord, dedicating herself entirely to his love and glory, as the angel continued to say to St. Bridget: "At once our queen resolved to sacrifice her will to God, with all her love, for the whole time of her life; and no one can understand how completely her will submitted itself then to embrace all things pleasing to him."*

Yet, when the immaculate infant understood afterwards that her holy parents, Joachim and Anna, had promised to God, even by a vow, as various authors relate, that if he should grant them a child, it should be consecrated to his service in the temple; for it was an ancient custom of the Jews to place their children in cells which were near the temple, that there they might be properly educated, as we learn from Baronius, Nicephorus, Cedrenus, and Suarez, as also from Josephus, the Jewish historian, St. John Damascene, St. Gregory of Nicomedia, St. Anselm,† and St. Ambrose.‡ As it is also clearly seen in Macchabees, where, speaking of Heliodorus, who wished to enter the temple by force in order to take from it the treasures deposited there, it is said: "Because the place was like to come into contempt . . . . the virgins that were shut up hastened to Onias."§ When Mary knew of this vow, as I have before said, she wished solemnly to offer and consecrate her-

* Serm. Ang. c. 14. † De Form. et Mor. B. M. ‡ De Vir. l. 1.
§ Pro eo quod in contemptum locus esset venturus. . . Virgines quæ conclusæ erant, procurrebant ad Oniam.

self to God, by presenting herself in the temple, as Germanus asserts, and also St. Epiphanius, who says, that when she was hardly three years old she was presented in the temple,* at an age when children have the greatest desire for the assistance of their parents, and need it the most. She was even the first to entreat her parents earnestly that they would take her to the temple, to fulfil their promise; and her holy mother, Anna, as St. Gregory of Nyssa says, did not delay to bring her there, and offer her to God.†

And behold, Joachim and Anna, generously sacrificing to God what was dearest to them on earth, set out from Nazareth, carrying by turns, in their arms, their beloved little daughter, who could not walk so great a distance as was that from Nazareth to Jerusalem, a journey, as several authors assert, of eighty miles. They thus went on their way, accompanied by only a few of their relations, but by hosts of angels, as St. George of Nicomedia asserts,‡ who attended and ministered to the immaculate Virgin, as she went to dedicate herself to the Divine Majesty. How beautiful are thy steps, oh prince's daughter! "Quam pulchri sunt gressus tui, filia principis!"§ Oh, how beautiful, how pleasing to God, as the angels sung, are thy steps, as thou goest to offer thyself to him, oh

* Tertio anno oblata est in templo. Serm. de Laud. Virg.
† Anna haud cunctata est eam at templum adducere, ac Deo offerre. Or. de Nat. Chr.
‡ De Oblat. Deip.
§ Cant. vii. 1.

great and chosen daughter of our common Lord! God himself on that day, says Bernardine de Bustis, celebrated a great feast with the whole celestial court, when he beheld his spouse conducted to the temple.* For he never saw a creature more holy and more beloved offering herself to him.† Go, then, said St. Germanus, Archbishop of Constantinople, go, oh queen of the world, oh mother of God, go joyfully to the house of the Lord, to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit that will make thee mother of the eternal World.‡

When the holy company had arrived at the temple, the eager child turned to her parents, kneeling kissed their hands, and asked for their benediction; and then, without turning back, she ascended the fifteen steps of the temple, as Arias Montanus relates upon the authority of Josephus, the Jewish historian, and presented herself to the priest, who, according to St. Germanus, was Zachary; then, taking leave of the world, and renouncing all the goods which it promises to its followers, she offered and consecrated herself to her Creator.

At the time of the deluge, the raven which was sent by Noe from the ark remained to feed

* Magnam quoque festivitatem fecit Deus cum angelis in deductione suæ sponsæ ad templum. Marial. p. 4, Serm. 1.

† Quia nullus unquam Deo gratior, usque ad illud tempus ascendit. Loc. cit.

‡ Abi ergo, oh Domina Mater Dei, in atria Domini, exultans et expectans Sancti Spiritus adventum et unigeniti Filii conceptionem De Oblat. Virg.

upon the bodies of the dead, but the dove without stopping to rest her foot, returned quickly to the ark: She returned to him into the ark: "Reversa est ad eum in arcam."* Many who are sent by God into this world, unhappily stop to feed on earthly things. Not so Mary, our celestial dove; she knew that God should be our only good, our only hope, our only love; she knew that the world is full of dangers, and that he who the soonest leaves it, is freest from its snares; therefore she sought promptly to flee from it in her tenderest years, and seclude herself in the sacred retirement of the temple, where she could better hear the voice of God, and better honor and love him. And thus the holy Virgin, from the beginning of her life, rendered herself dear and acceptable to her Lord, as the holy Church makes her say: "Rejoice with me, all ye who love the Lord, for when I was little I pleased the Most High."† For this reason she was compared to the moon; for as the moon completes her course more quickly than the other planets, so Mary attained perfection sooner than all the saints, by giving herself promptly to God without delay; and entirely without reserve. And now let us pass to the second point, upon which we shall have much to say.

Point Second.—The enlightened infant well

* Gen. viii. 9.

† Congratulamini mihi omnes qui diligitis Dominum, quia, cum essem parvula, placui altissimo. In 2, Resp. 1, Noct, in Fest. S. M. ad Niv.

knew that God does not accept a divided heart, but wishes it entirely consecrated to his love, according to the precept he has given: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart."* Hence, from the first moment of her existence, she began to love God with all her strength, and gave herself wholly to him. But her most holy soul awaited with earnest desire the time when she could in reality consecrate herself entirely, and with a public solemnity, to God. Let us consider, then, with how great a fervor the loving Virgin, seeing herself actually inclosed in that holy place, first prostrated herself to kiss that ground as the house of the Lord, then adored his infinite majesty, and thanked him for the favor she had received of being brought so early to inhabit his house. Then she offered herself entirely to God; entirely, without reserving any thing. She offered to him all her powers and all her senses, her whole mind and her whole heart, her whole soul and her whole body, for it was then, as we are told, that to please God, she made the vow of virginity. A vow, according to Rupert the Abbot, that Mary was the first to make: "Votum virginitatis prima emisit."† And she offered herself without limitation of time, as Bernardine de Bustis asserts: Mary offered and dedicated herself to the perpetual service of God.‡ Since she had then the intention of dedi-

* Diliges Dominum Deum tuum ex toto corde tuo.

† Lib. 1, de Inst. Virg.

‡ Maria seipsam perpetuis Dei obsequiis obtulit et dedicavit. Mar. p. 4, Serm. 1.

cating her whole life to the service of his Divine Majesty in the temple, if it should so please God; and of never quitting that sacred place, Oh, with what affection must she have exclaimed: My beloved to me, and I to him: "Dilectus meus mihi, et ego illi."* I for him, as Cardinal Hugo remarks, will wholly live and will wholly die: "Ego illi tota vivam, et tota moriar." My Lord and my God, she said, I have come hither only to please thee, and to give thee all the honor I can; here I will live wholly for thee and die for thee, if it so please thee; accept the sacrifice which this thy poor servant makes to thee, and help me to be faithful to thee.

And here let us consider how holy was the life that Mary led in the temple, where, like the rising morn, "Quasi aurora consurgens," increasing always in perfection, as the dawn increases in light; who can describe how, from day to day, in her more brightly shone her virtues; charity, modesty, humility, silence, mortification, meekness? This fair olive-tree, planted in the house of God, as St. John Damascene says, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, became the habitation of all the virtues.† The same saint says in another place: The countenance of the Virgin was modest, her mind humble, her words kind, proceeding from a recollected heart.‡ And he elsewhere asserts: The Vir-

* Cant. ii. 16.

† Ad templum adducitur, ac deinde in domo Dei plantata, atque per spiritum saginata, instar olivæ frugiferæ virtutum omnium domicilium efficitur. L. 4, de Fid. c. 15. ‡ Or. 1, de Nat. Virg.

gin withdrew her thoughts from all earthly things, embracing all the virtues. Thus, then, by the practice of perfection, she made so great progress in a short time, as to merit being made a temple worthy of God.*

St. Anselm, also, speaking of the life of the holy Virgin in the temple, says: Mary was docile, spoke little, was always composed, never laughed, was never distracted. She persevered in prayer, in the reading of the Holy Scripture, in fasting, and all virtuous works.† St. Jerome goes more into detail, and tells us how Mary's life was ordered: From early in the morning till nine o'clock she remained in prayer; from nine to three she was engaged in labor; at three she resumed her prayers, until the angel, as usual, brought her food. She was the most constant in vigils, the most exact in obedience to the divine law, the most profound in humility, and the most perfect in every virtue. No one ever saw her angry; all her words were so full of sweetness, that when she spoke it always appeared that God was with her.‡

The divine mother herself revealed to St. Elizabeth, a Benedictine nun, in the convent of Sconaugia, as we read in St. Bonaventure,§ that when she was left in the temple by her parents, she resolved on having God alone for

* De Fid. Ort. l. 4, c. 15.

† De Form. et Mor. B. M.

‡ De illa appres. l'ist. della vita di Maria del P. Gius. de Gesu te Maria. Carm. Scalzo. l. 2, c. 1.

§ Vita Christi. c. 3.

father, and often thought what she could do to please him.* She determined, moreover, to consecrate to him her virginity, and to possess nothing in the world, giving her entire will to God.† She also told her that above all the divine precepts to be observed, she placed before her eyes the precept, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God,"‡ and that she went in the middle of the night to pray the Lord before the altar of the temple, that he would grant her the grace to observe the commandments, and to see the mother of the Redeemer born while she lived, praying him that he would preserve her eyes to see her, her tongue to praise her, her hands and feet to serve her, and her knees to adore in her arms, his divine Son. St. Elizabeth, on hearing this, said to her: "But, my Lady, were you not full of grace and virtue?" and Mary answered her: "Know that I esteemed myself the most vile, and unworthy of divine grace; therefore I prayed thus for grace and virtues." And, finally, that she might persuade us of the absolute necessity we are all under, of asking from God the graces that we need, she added: "Do you think that I obtained grace and virtue without effort? Know that I received no grace from

* Cum pater meus et mater mea dimiserunt me in templo, statui in corde meo habere Deum in patrem, et sæpe cogitabam quid possem facere illi gratum.

† Statui servare virginitatem; nihil unquam possidere in mundo; et omnem voluntatem meam Deo commisi.

‡ Diliges Dominum Deum tuum.

God without great effort, constant prayer, ardent desire, and many tears and penances."

But above all, we should consider the revelations made to St. Bridget, of the virtues and exercises practised by the blessed Virgin in her childhood, in these words: "Even from an infant Mary was filled with the Holy Spirit, and as she increased in age, she increased also in grace. Even from that time she resolved to love God with all her heart, so that he should never be offended by her actions or her words, and for this reason all the goods of earth were despised by her. She gave all she could to the poor. In her food she was so temperate that she only took what was absolutely necessary to support life. Discovering then from the sacred Scriptures, that this God was to be born from a virgin to redeem the world, her spirit was so kindled with divine love that she desired and thought only of God; and taking pleasure only in God, shunned the conversation even of her parents, that they might not hinder her from thinking on God. And more than all did she desire that the coming of the Messiah might be in her day, that she might be the servant to that happy Virgin who merited to be his mother. Thus the revelation made to St. Bridget.*

Ah, for love of this exalted child the Redeemer hastened his coming into the world, for whilst she through her humility did not esteem herself worthy of being the servant of the divine moth-

*L. 2, et. 1, 3, c. 8.

er, she was herself chosen for this mother, and by the odor of her virtues and her powerful prayers, she drew into her virginal womb the divine Son. Hence was Mary called the turtle by her divine spouse: The voice of the turtle is heard in our land: "Vox turturis audita est in terra nostra."* Not only because she, like the turtle, always loved solitude, living in this world as in a desert, but also because, like the turtle who makes the fields mournful with its sad note, Mary was always mourning in the temple over the miseries of the lost world, and asking from God, the Redeemer of the world. Oh, with how much greater affection and fervor than the prophets did she repeat to God in the temple their supplications and sighs, that he might send the Redeemer: "Send forth, oh Lord, the Lamb, the ruler of the earth."† "Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the just."‡ "Oh, that thou wouldst rend the heavens and wouldst come down."§

In a word, it was an object of delight to God to see this young Virgin always ascending to a higher perfection, like a pillar of smoke, rich in the odors of all virtues, as the Holy Spirit exactly describes her in the sacred Canticles: "Who is she that goeth up by the desert, as a pillar of smoke of aromatical spices, of myrrh,

* Vox turturis audita est in terra nostra. Cant. ii. 12.
† Emitte agnum, Domine, dominatorem terræ. Isa. xvi. 1.
‡ Rorate cœli desuper, et nubes pluant justum. Id. xlv. 8.
§ Utinam dirumperes cœlos, et descenderes. Id. lxiv. 1.

and frankincense, and of all the powders of the perfumer?" * This holy child, says Sophronius, was in truth the garden of delights of the Lord, for he found there flowers of every kind, and all the odors of the virtues.† This St. John Chrysostom affirms, that God chose Mary for his mother on earth, because he found not on the earth a more perfect and more holy Virgin than Mary, neither a place more worthy for him to dwell in than her sacred womb;‡ as St. Bernard also says: On the earth there was no more worthy place than the womb of the Virgin.§ St. Antoninus asserts that the blessed Virgin, in order to be elected and predestined to the dignity of mother of God, must have possessed a perfection so great and consummate, that it should surpass the perfection of all other creatures.‖

As then the holy young child Mary, presented and offered herself in the temple promptly and entirely, so let us, at this day, without delay and without reserve, present ourselves to Mary, and entreat her to offer us to God, who will not refuse us when he sees us offered by the hand of her who was the living temple of the Holy Spirit, the delight of her Lord, and

* Quæ est ista quæ ascendit per desertum sicut virgula fumi ex aromatibus myrrhæ, et thuris et universi pulveris pigmentarii. Cant. iii. 6.

† Vere virgo erat hortus deliciarum in quo consita sunt universa florum genera, et odoramenta virtutum. Serm. de Ass.

‡ Ap. Canis. l. 1. de B. V. c. 13.

§ Nec in terris locus dignior utero virginali.

‖ Ultima gratia perfectionis est præparatio ad Filium Dei concipiendum. P. 4, tit. 15, c. 6.

the chosen mother of the Eternal Word. And let us place a great hope in this exalted and most gracious Lady, who rewards with so much love the devotions that are offered to her by her servants, as may be seen by the following example.

EXAMPLE.

We read in the life of Sister Domenica of Paradise, written by Father Ignatius of Niente, a Dominican, that in a village called Paradise, near Florence, this little girl was born of poor parents. From her infancy she practised devotion to the divine mother. She fasted every day of the week in her honor, and on Saturday she distributed to the poor the food of which she had deprived herself; and every Saturday she went into the garden, or into the neighboring fields, and there gathered all the flowers she could find, and placed them before a statue of the holy Virgin with the infant Jesus in her arms, which she had in her house. But let us see now with what favors our most grateful Lady compensated this her servant, for the homage she paid her. As she stood one Sunday at the window, when she was about ten years of age, she saw in the street a woman with a beautiful countenance, accompanied by a little child, and they both extended their hands as if to ask alms. She went for some bread, and, behold, before she could open the door, they stood beside her, and she saw wounds on the hands, feet, and breast of the child.

Then she said to the woman: "Who has wounded this child?" "It was love," answered the mother. Domenica, charmed by his beauty and modesty, asked him if his wounds pained him; but he only answered with a smile. As they were standing near the images of Jesus and of Mary, the mother said to Domenica: "Tell me, little girl, what makes you crown these images with flowers?" She answered: "The love I have for Jesus and Mary makes me do it." "And how much do you love them?" "I love them as much as I can." "And how much can you love them?" "As much as they will help me." "Continue, then," said the mother, "continue to love them, for they will richly return your love in paradise."

Then the little girl perceived a celestial odor coming forth from those wounds, and she asked the mother with what ointment she had anointed them, and if that ointment could be purchased? "It is purchased," answered she, "with faith and works." Domenica then offered them the bread. The mother said: "The food of this my Son is love; tell him that you love Jesus and he will be satisfied." The child at mention of this word love, began to show great signs of joy, and turning to the little girl, he asked her how much she loved Jesus. She answered that she loved him so much, that day and night she was always thinking of him, and desired nothing else but to please him as much as she could. "Well," answered he, "love him; and love will teach you

what you must do to satisfy him." The odor then increasing which came from those wounds, Domenica exclaimed: "Oh God, this odor makes me die of love; if the odor of a child is so sweet, what must be the odor of paradise?" But behold the scene was changed; the mother appeared robed as a queen, and surrounded with light, and the child resplendent as a sun of beauty. He took those flowers and strewed them on her head. She at once saw that these persons were Jesus and Mary, and prostrated herself in adoration before them. And thus ended the vision. Domenica afterwards took the Dominican habit, and died in the year 1553, with the reputation of a saint.

PRAYER.

Oh beloved of God! most amiable child Mary! oh, that like thee, who didst present thyself in the temple, and at once and wholly didst consecrate thyself the glory and love of thy God, I might offer to thee to-day the first years of my life, and dedicate myself entirely to thy service, oh my most holy and sweet Lady! But it is now too late, for, unhappily, I have lost so many years in serving the world and my caprices, as it were entirely forgetful of thee and of God. Alas for the time in which I did not love thee!* But it is better to commence late than at all. Behold, oh Mary, to-day I present myself to thee, and offer myself entirely to thy

* Væ tempori illi, in quo non amavi te.

service, for the longer or shorter time that remains for me to live on the earth; and with thee I renounce all creatures, and dedicate myself entirely to the love of my Creator. I consecrate to thee, then, oh queen, my mind, that I may always think of the love that thou dost merit, my tongue to praise thee, and my heart to love thee. Accept, oh most holy Virgin, the offering which the most miserable sinner presents to thee; accept it, I pray thee, for the sake of that consolation which filled thy heart when in the temple thou gavest thyself to God. And if late I begin to serve thee, it is right that I should make good the time lost by redoubling my devotion and my love. Aid my weakness, oh mother of mercy, with thy powerful intercession, and obtain for me perseverance and strength to be faithful to thee until death; that always serving thee in this life, I may come to praise thee eternally in paradise.

DISCOURSE IV.

ON THE ANNUNCIATION OF MARY.

Mary could not humble herself more than she did in the incarnation of the Word. On the other hand, God could not exalt her more than he has exalted her.

"Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be humbled, and he that shall humble himself shall be

exalted."* These are the words of our Lord, and cannot fail. Therefore, God having determined to make himself man, in order to redeem lost man, and thus manifest to the world his infinite goodness, being about to choose on earth his mother, sought among women the holiest and most humble. Among them all he saw one, the youthful virgin Mary, who, as she was the most perfect in all virtues, so was she the most simple; and humble as a dove in her own esteem. "There are young maidens without number; one is my dove, my perfect one."† Let this one, then, said God, be my chosen mother. Let us then see how humble Mary was, and how God exalted her. Mary could not humble herself more than she did in the incarnation of the Word; this will be the first point. That God could not exalt Mary more than he exalted her, will be the second.

First Point.—Our Lord in the holy Canticles, speaking precisely of the humility of this most humble Virgin, said: "While the King was at his repose, my spikenard sent forth the odor thereof."‡ St. Antoninus, commenting on these words, says that the spikenard, inasmuch as it is a small and lowly plant, was a type of the humility of Mary, whose odor ascended to heaven, and drew, even from the bosom of the eter-

* Qui autem se exaltaverit, humiliabitur; et qui se humili averit, exaltabitur. Matt. xxiii. 12.

† Adolescentularum non est numerus. Una est columba mea, perfecta mea. Cant. vi. 7, 8.

‡ Dum esset Rex in accubitu suo, nardus mea dedit odorem suum. Cant. i. 11.

nal Father, into her virginal womb the divine Word. The spikenard is a small herb, and signifies the blessed Virgin, who exhaled the odor of humility; which odor ascended even to heaven, and in heaven as it were awakened him who was in his repose, and brought him to rest in her womb.* Thus the Lord, drawn by the odor of this humble Virgin, chose her for his mother, when he wished to become man to redeem the world. But he, for the greater glory and merit of this his mother, would not make himself her Son without first obtaining her consent. He would not take flesh from her without her consent.† Therefore, when the humble young Virgin was in her poor dwelling, sighing and praying to God more earnestly than ever that he would send the Redeemer, as was revealed to St. Elizabeth, a Benedictine nun, behold the Archangel Gabriel came, bearing the great embassy. He enters and salutes her, saying: "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women."‡ Hail, oh Virgin, full of grace, for thou wast always rich in grace, above all the other saints. The Lord is with thee because thou art so humble. Thou art blessed among women, for all others have incurred the curse of original sin; but thou, be-

* Nardus est herba parva, et significat B. Virginem, quæ dedit humilitatis odorem; qui odor usque ad cœlum ascendit, et in cœlo accumbentem fecit quasi evigilare, et in utero suo quiescere. P. 4, tit. 15, c. 21, s. 2.

† Noluit carnem sumere ex ipsa, non dante ipsa. In Cant. 3.

‡ Ave gratia plena; Dominus tecum; benedicta tu in mulieribus. Luc. 1. 28.

cause thou art to be the mother of the Blessed One, hast been and wilt always be blessed, and free from every stain.

But what does the humble Mary answer to this salutation so full of praises? She answered nothing, but she was disturbed thinking on such a salutation: "And when she had heard, she was troubled at his saying, and thought with herself what manner of salutation this should be."* And why was she disturbed? through fear of illusion, or through modesty at the sight of a man, as some suppose, remembering that the angel appeared to her in human form? No, the text is plain; she was troubled at his saying, "turbata est in sermone ejus," as Eusebius Emissenus remarks: Not by his appearance, but by his speech: Non in vultu, sed in sermone ejus." Such a disturbance was then wholly owing to her humility at hearing those praises, so far beyond her humble esteem of herself. Hence the more she is exalted by the angel, the more she humbles herself, and the more she considers her nothingness. St. Bernardine remarks: If the angel had said that she was the greatest sinner in the world, Mary would not have been thus surprised; but in hearing those exalted praises she was greatly disturbed.† She was troubled because, being so full of humility, she

* Quæ cum audisset, turbata est in sermone ejus, et cogitabat qualis esset ista salutatio.

† Si dixisset, oh Maria, tu es major ribalda quæ est in mundo, non ita admirata fuisset; unde turbata fuit de tantis laudibus. Serm. 35, de Am. Inc. p. 3.

abhorred every praise, and desired that none but her Creator, the giver of every good, should be praised and blessed. Mary said exactly this to St. Bridget, speaking of the time when she became mother of God. "I disliked my own praise, and only wished to hear that of the giver and Creator." *

But I would remark, that the blessed Virgin had already well learned from the Holy Scriptures that the time foretold by the prophets for the coming of the Messiah had arrived; that the weeks of Daniel were now completed; that already, according to the prophecy of Jacob, the sceptre of Judah had passed into the hands of Herod, a strange king, and she well knew that a virgin was to be the mother of the Messiah; and she hears those praises offered by the angel to herself, which seemed to belong only to the mother of God; did it then come into her mind that perhaps she herself might be that chosen mother of God? No, her profound humility did not permit this thought. These praises had no other effect than to cause her great fear; so that, as St. Peter Chrysologus remarks: As Christ wished to be consoled by an angel, so must the Virgin be encouraged by an angel.† As the Saviour willed to be comforted by an angel, so it was necessary that St. Gabriel, seeing Mary so full of fear at that salutation, should

* Nolui laudem meam, sed solius Datoris et Creatoris. L. 1, Rev. c. 23.

† Sicut Christus per angelum voluit confortari, ita per angelum debuit Virgo animari.

encourage her, saying: "Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God."* Do not fear, oh Mary, nor be surprised by the great titles by which I have saluted thee, for if thou art so little and humble in thine own eyes, God, who exalts the humble, has made thee worthy to find the grace lost by man; and therefore has he preserved thee from the common stain of all the children of Adam; therefore, even from the moment of thy conception he has adorned thee with a greater grace than that of all the saints; and therefore, finally, he now exalts thee to be his mother: "Behold, thou shalt conceive and shalt bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus."†

Now why this delay? The angel, oh Lady, awaits thy answer, as St. Bernard says: We rather await it who are condemned to death.‡ Behold, oh our mother, continues St. Bernard, to thee is now offered the price of our salvation, which will be the divine Word in thee made man; if thou wilt accept him for a son, we shall be immediately delivered from death; behold the price of our salvation is offered to thee; immediately we are liberated if thou dost consent.§ Thy Lord himself, as he is greatly enamored of thy beauty, so much the more desires

* Ne timeas, Maria, invenisti gratiam apud Deum. Luc. i. 30.
† Ecce concipies, et paries filium, et vocabis nomen ejus Jesum. Luc. i. 31.
‡ Expectat angelus responsum, expectamus et nos, oh Domina, verbum miserationis, quos miserabiliter premit sententia damnationis. Hom. 4, Sup. Miss.
§ Ecce offertur tibi pretium salutis nostræ; statim liberabi mur, si consentis. Loc. cit.

thy consent, on which he has made the salvation of the world depend.* Answer quickly, oh Lady, adds St. Augustine, delay no longer the salvation of the world, which now depends on thy consent.†

But, behold, Mary already answers; she answers the angel, and says: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to thy word."‡ Oh, what more beautiful, more humble, and more prudent answer could all the wisdom of men and of angels united have invented, if they had thought of it for millions of years! Oh powerful answer, which gave joy in heaven, and poured upon the earth a vast flood of graces and blessings! Answer, that hardly came forth from the humble heart of Mary before it drew from the bosom of the eternal Father, the only begotten Son, to become man in her most pure womb! yes, for hardly had she uttered these words: Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word; when immediately the Word was made flesh: "Verbum caro factum est;" the Son of God became also the Son of Mary. Oh powerful Fiat! exclaims St. Thomas of Villanova; oh efficacious Fiat! oh Fiat to be reverenc-

* Ipse quoque Dominus, quantum concupivit decorem tuum, tantum desiderat et responsionis assensum, in qua nimirum proposuit salvare mundum. Hom. 4, Sup. Miss.

† Responde jam Virgo sacra, vitam quid tricas mundo? Serm. 21, de Temp.

‡ Ecce ancilla Domini, fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum. Luc. I. 38.

ed above every fiat!* for by another fiat God created the light, the heaven, and the earth; but by this fiat of Mary, says the saint, God became man like us.

But let us not wander from our point, let us consider the great humility of the Virgin in this answer. She was indeed well enlightened to understand how great was the dignity of the mother of God. She already had been assured by the angel that she was this happy mother chosen by the Lord. But with all this she is not at all raised in her own esteem, stops not at all to enjoy her exaltation, but considering on one side her own nothingness, and on the other the infinite majesty of her God, who chose her for his mother, she knows how unworthy she is of such an honor, but would by no means oppose herself to his will. Hence, when her consent was asked, what does she do? what does she say? Wholly annihilated as to self; all inflamed, on the other hand, with the desire of uniting herself thus more closely to God, by entirely abandoning herself to the divine will: Behold, she answers, behold the handmaid of the Lord: "Ecce ancilla Domini." Behold the slave of the Lord: obliged to do whatever her Lord commands. And she intended to say: If the Lord chooses me for his mother, who have nothing of my own; if all that I have is his gift, who could think that he selects me for any merit of my

* O Fiat potens! O Fiat efficax! O Fiat super omni fiat venerandum! Conc. 3, de Ann.

own? Behold the handmaid of the Lord. What merit can a slave have, to be made the mother of her Lord? Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Let the goodness of God alone be praised, and not the slave; since it is wholly his goodness which has led him to place his eye on a creature so lowly as I, and make her so great.

Oh humility, exclaims here Guerric the Abbot; small in its own eyes, great in the eyes of God! Insufficient to itself, sufficient to him whom the whole world cannot contain!* But still more beautiful on this occasion is the exclamation of St. Bernard, which he makes in the fourth sermon on the Assumption of Mary, in which, admiring the humility of Mary, he says: Oh Lady, how have you been able to unite in your heart such an humble esteem of yourself with so much purity, so much innocence, and with such fulness of grace† as thou dost possess! And whence, oh blessed Virgin, did this humility, this so great humility, take such deep root in thee, when thou wast so honored and exalted by God?‡ Lucifer, seeing himself endowed with great beauty, aspired to exalt his throne above the stars, and make himself like to God.§ Now what would not that proud spirit have

* O humilitas, angusta sibi, ampla Divinitati! Insufficiens sibi, sufficiens ei quem non capit orbis!

† Quanta humilitatis virtus, cum tanta puritate, cum innocentia tanta, imo cum tanta gratia plenitudine?

‡ Unde tibi humilitas, et tanta humilitas O Beata?

§ Super astra Dei exaltabo solium meum, et similis ero altissimo Isa. xiv. 13.

said and attempted if he had seen himself adorned with the privileges of Mary? Not so the humble Mary; the more she saw herself exalted, the more she humbled herself. Ah Lady, for this beautiful humility, concludes St. Bernard, thou hast indeed merited to be regarded by God with peculiar love, to charm thy King with thy beauty; to draw him with the sweet odor of thy humility, from his repose in the bosom of God, into thy most pure womb.* Hence St. Bernardine de Bustis says, that Mary merited more by that answer: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord," than all creatures could merit by their works.†

Thus, says St. Bernard, this innocent Virgin, although by her virginity she rendered herself dear to God, yet by humility afterwards rendered herself worthy, as much as a creature can render itself worthy, to be made the mother of her Creator. Although she pleased by her virginity, by her humility she conceived: "Etsi placuit ex virginitate, tamen ex humilitate concepit."‡ And St. Jerome confirms this by saying, that God chose her for his own mother more for her humility, than for all her other sublime virtues.§ Mary herself expressed this to St. Bridget, by

* Digna plane quam respiceret Dominus, cujus decorem concupisceret Rex, cujus odore suavissimo ab æterno illo Paterni sinus attraheretur accubitu.

† Beata Virgo plus meruit, dicendo humiliter: Ecce ancilla Domini, quam simul mereri possent omnes puræ creaturæ. Mar. 12, p. 5, p. 2.

‡ Hom. 1, Sup. Miss.

§ Maluit Deus de Virgine incarnari propter humilitatem, quam propter aliam quamcumque virtutem.

saying to her: How much did I merit such a grace to be made the mother of my Lord, if not because I knew my nothingness, and humiliated myself?* And this she declared before in her Canticle, so full of the deepest humility, when she said: "Because he hath regarded the humility of his handmaid . . . He that is mighty hath done great things to me."† Upon which words St. Lawrence Justinian remarks, that the blessed Virgin does not say, he regarded my virginity, my innocence, but only my humility.‡ And by this humility, as St. Francis de Sales remarks, Mary did not intend to praise the virtue of her humility, but wished to proclaim that God had regarded her nothingness, *humility, that is, nothingness:* "Humilitatem, id est nihilitatem," and through his pure goodness had willed thus to exalt her.

In a word, St. Augustine says that the humility of Mary was like a ladder, by which our Lord deigned to descend upon earth to become man in her womb.§ And St. Antoninus confirms this by saying that the humility of the Virgin was her most perfect and the next preparation to become the mother of God.‖ And by this is

* Unde promerui tantam gratiam, nisi quia cogitavi et scivi nihil a me esse vel habere? L. 2, Rev. c. 35.

† Quia respexit humilitatem ancillæ suæ . . . . . fecit mihi magna qui potens est. Luc. 4. 48, 49.

‡ Non ait, respexit virginitatem, innocentiam; seu humilitatem tantum.

§ Facta est Mariæ humilitas scala cœlestis, per quam Deus descendit ad terras. Sup. Magn.

‖ Ultima gratia perfectionis est præparatio ad Filium Dei conci-

explained what Isaias predicted: "And there shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse, and a flower shall rise up out of his root.* The blessed Albertus Magnus remarks, that the divine flower, namely, the only-begotten of God, according to Isaias, would come forth, not from the top or the trunk of the tree of Jesse, but from its root, which precisely denotes the humility of the mother. † And this is more clearly explained by the Abbot of Celles. Observe, says he, that not from the top, but from the root this flower is to spring up.‡ And therefore our Lord said to his beloved daughter: "Turn away thy eyes from me, for they have made me flee away."§ And from whence flee, unless from the bosom of the Father to the womb of Mary?‖ as St. Augustine says. Upon which the learned interpreter Fernandez observes, that the most humble eyes of Mary, with which she always contemplated the divine greatness, never losing sight of her nothingness, did such violence to God herself that they drew him into her bosom.¶ And by this we are to understand, says Francone the Abbot, why the

piendum; quæ præparatio fuit per profundam humilitatem. p. 5, tit. 15, c. 6, et 8.

* Egredietur virga de radice Jesse, et flos de radice ejus ascendet. Isa. xi. 1.

† De radice ejus, humilitas cordis intelligitur.

‡ Nota, quod non ex summitate, sed de radice ascendet flos.

§ Averte oculos tuos, quia ipsi me avolare fecerunt. Cant. vi. 4.

‖ Unde avolare, nisi a sinu Patris in uterum matris?

¶ Ita illius oculi humillimi Deum tenuerunt, ut suavissima quadam violentia ipsummet Dei Patris Verbum in uterum suum Virgo attraxerit. In c. 14, Gen. sect. 1.

Holy Spirit so much praised the beauty of this his spouse for her eyes, which were like those of a dove: "How beautiful art thou, my love! how, beautiful art thou! thy eyes are like doves' eyes;"* because Mary, looking on God with the eyes of a simple, humble dove, he was so much enamored of her beauty, that with the bands of love she made him a prisoner in her virginal womb; these are the words of the abbot: In what place on the earth could so beautiful a virgin be found, who could allure the King of heaven by her eyes, and by a holy violence lead him captive, bound in the chains of charity?† We will conclude this point by remarking that Mary, in the incarnation of the Word, as we have seen from the beginning, could not have humiliated herself more than she did. Let us now see how God could exalt her no higher than he did by making her his mother.

Point Second.—In order to comprehend the greatness to which Mary was elevated, it would be necessary to comprehend the sublime majesty and grandeur of God. It is sufficient, then, only to say, that God made this Virgin his mother, to have it understood that God could not exalt her more than he did exalt her. Rightly did St. Arnold Carnotensis affirm, that God, by

* Quam pulchra es, amica mea, quam pulchra es! oculi tui columbarum. Cant. iv. 1.

† Ubinam terrarum tam speciosa Virgo inveniri posset, quæ Regem cœlorum oculis caperet, et vinculis charitatis pia violentia captivum traheret. De Grat. Nov. Test. tr. 6.

making himself the Son of the Virgin, established her in superior rank to all the saints and angels: "Maria constituta est super omnem Creaturam."* So that, next to God, she is incomparably higher than the celestial spirits, as St. Ephrem asserts: "Nulla comparatione cæteris superis est gloriosior."† St. Andrew of Crete confirms this, saying: God excepted, she is the higest of all: "Excepto Deo, omnibus est altior."‡ And St. Anselm also says: Oh Lady, there is none equal to thee, because every other, is above or beneath thee; God alone is superior to thee, and all others are inferior.§ So great, in a word, says St. Bernardine, is the exaltation of this Virgin, that God alone is able to comprehend it.‖

This removes the surprise expressed by some persons, remarks St. Thomas of Villanova, that the holy Evangelists, who have so fully recorded the praises of a Baptist and a Magdalene, have been so brief in their descriptions of the privileges of Mary; for, says the saint, it was enough to say of her, that from her Jesus was born.¶ What more would you wish the Evangelists to say, continues the saint, of the grandeur of this Virgin? let it be enough for you, that they at-

* Tract. de L. V. † Or. de Laud. Deip.

‡ Or. de Dorm. Deip.

§ Nihil tibi, Domina est æquaÌis; omne enim quod est, aut supra te est, aut infra; quod supra, solus Deus; quod infra, est omne quod Deus non est. Ap. Pelb. Stellar. 1. p. 3, a. 2.

‖ Tanta est perfectio Virginis ut soli Deo cognoscenda reservatur. To. 2, Serm. 51, a. c. 3. 2.

¶ Satis fuit de ea dicere; de qua natus est Jesus.

test her to be the mother of God. Having recorded in these few words the greatest, and, indeed, the whole of her merits, it was not necessary for them to describe each separately.* And why not? because, as St. Anselm answers: To say of Mary this alone, that she was the mother of a God, transcends every glory that can be attributed to her, in thought or word, after God.† Peter of Celles adds, remarking on this same thought: By whatever name you may wish to call her, whether queen of heaven, ruler of the angels, or any other title of honor, you will never succeed in honoring her so much as by calling her only the mother of God.‡

The reason of this is evident, for as the angelic Doctor teaches: The nearer a thing approaches its author, the greater the perfection it receives from him; therefore, Mary being the creature nearest to God, she has partaken more than all others of his grace, perfection, and greatness.§ To this Father Suarez traces the

* Quid ultra requiris? Sufficit tibi quod mater Dei est. Ubi ergo totum erat, pars scribenda non fuit. Conc. 2, de Nat. Virg.

† Hoc solum de S. Virgine predicari, quod Dei mater sit, excedit omnem altitudinem, quæ post Deum dici vel cogitari potest. De Exc. Virg. c. 4.

‡ Si cœli Reginam, si angelorum Dominam, vel quodlibet aliud protuleris, non assurges ad hunc honorem, quo prædicatur Dei genitrix. L. de Pan. c. 31.

§ Quanto aliquid magis appropinquat principio in quolibet genere tanto magis participat effectum illius principii. Beata autem virgo Maria propinquissima Christo fuit secundum humanitatem; quia ex ea accepit humanam naturam; et ideo præcæteris majorem debuit a Christo gratiæ plenitudinem obtinere. 3 p. q. 27, a. 5.

cause why the dignity of mother of God is of an order superior to any other created dignity; because it appertains, in a certain manner, to the order of union with a divine person, with which union it is necessarily connected.* Hence St. Denis the Carthusian asserts, that after the hypostatic union, there is none more intimate than the union of the mother of God with her Son.† This, as St. Thomas teaches, is the highest union that a pure creature can have with God.‡ And the blessed Albertus Magnus affirms, that to be mother of God is a dignity next to that of being God;§ therefore he says, that Mary could not be more united to God than she was, without becoming God.‖

St. Bernardine affirms, that in order to become mother of God, it was requisite that the holy Virgin should be exalted to a certain equality with the divine Persons, by a certain infinity of graces.¶ And as children are esteemed morally one with their parents, so that their posses-

* Dignitas matris est alterioris ordinis, pertinet enim quodammodo ad ordinem unionis hypostaticæ; illum enim intrinsece respicit, et cum illa necessariam conjunctionem habet. To. 2, in. 3, p. d. 2, s. 2.

† Post hypostaticam conjunctionem non est alia tam vicina, ut unio matris Dei cum filio suo. L. 2, de Laud. V.

‡ Est suprema quædam conjunctio cum persona infinita. 1, p. q. 25, a. 6.

§ Immediate post esse Deum, est esse matrem Dei. Super Miss. c. 180.

‖ Magis Deo conjungi, nisi fieret Deus, non potuit.

¶ Quod fœmina conciperet et pareret Deum oportuit eam elevari ad quamdam æqualitatem divinam, per quamdam infinitatem gratiarum. To. 1, Serm. 61, c. 16.

sions and honors are in common, therefore St. Peter Damian says, that if God dwells in creatures in different modes, he dwelt in Mary in a singular mode of fitness, making himself one with her.* And he exclaims in these celebrated words: Here let every creature be silent and tremble, and scarcely dare to behold the immensity of so great a dignity. God dwells in a virgin with whom he has the identity of one nature.†

St. Thomas asserts, that Mary, being made mother of God, by reason of this close union with an infinite good, received a certain infinite dignity, which Father Suarez calls infinite of its kind.‡ The dignity of mother of God is the highest dignity which can be conferred on a pure creature. The angelic Doctor teaches, that the humanity of Jesus Christ, though it might have received greater habitual grace from God, yet, as to the union with a divine Person, could not receive greater perfection; so, on the other hand, the blessed Virgin could receive no greater dignity than to be the mother of God. For as habitual grace(this is his reasoning)is a created gift, we must acknowledge that its essence is finite. The capacity of every creature is lim-

* Quarto modo inest Deus creaturæ, scilicet Mariæ Virgini, per identitatem, quia idem est quam illa. Serm. 1, de Nat. Virg.

† Hic taceat et contremiscat omnis creatura, et vix audeat aspicere tantæ dignitatis immensitatem. Habitat Deus in Virgine, cum qua unius naturæ habet identitatem. Loc. cit.

‡ Dignitas matris Dei suo genere est infinita. To. 2, in 3, p. d. 18, l. 4

ited in measure, which however prevents not the divine power from being able to form another creature of greater capacity.* Though the divine power may create something greater and better than the habitual grace of Christ, yet it could not destine it to any thing greater than was the personal union of the only begotten Son with the Father.† The blessed Virgin, because she is the mother of God, has a certain infinite dignity from the infinite good, which is God; and in this respect nothing greater can be created.‡ St. Thomas of Villanova says the same thing: Certainly there is something infinite in being the mother of the Infinite One.§ And St. Bernardine says, that the state to which God exalted Mary as his mother was the highest, so that he could exalt her no higher.‖ And this is confirmed by Albertus Magnus. The Lord conferred on the blessed Virgin the high-

* Cum enim gratia habitualis sit donum creatum, confiteri oportet quod habeat essentiam finitam. Est cujuslibet creaturæ determinata capacitatis mensura, quæ tamen divinæ potestati non præjudicat, quin possit aliam creaturam majoris capacitatis facere. Opusc. 2, Comp. Theol. c. 215.

† Virtus divina, licet possit facere aliquid majus et melius quam sit habitualis gratia Christi, non tamen posset facere quod ordinaretur ad aliquid majus quam sit unio personalis ad filium unigenitum a patre. 3. p. q. 7, a. 12, ad 2.

‡ B. Virgo ex hoc quod est mater Dei, habet quamdam dignitatem infinitam, ex bono infinito quod est Deus. Et ex hac parte non potest fieri melius. 1, p. q. 25, a. 6, ad 4.

§ Utique habet quandam infinitatem esse matrem infiniti. Conc. 3, de Nat. Mar.

‖ Status maternitatis Dei erat summus status, qui puræ creaturæ dari posset. To. 3, Serm. 6, a. 3, c. 1.

est gift which any pure creature was capable of receiving, namely, the maternity of God.*

Therefore St. Bonaventure wrote that celebrated sentence, that God could make a greater world, a greater heaven, but could not exalt a creature to greater excellence than by making her his mother.† But better than all others has the divine mother herself described the height to which God has elevated her when she said: He that is mighty hath done great things to me: "Fecit mihi magna qui potens est."‡ And why has the holy Virgin never made known what were the great favors conferred upon her by God? St. Thomas of Villanova answers, that Mary did not explain them, because they were so great that they could not be explained.§

St. Bernard therefore, with reason, says that God has created all the world for this Virgin, who was to be his mother: "Propter hanc totus mundus factus est."‖ And St. Bonaventure says that the preservation of the world is at the disposal of Mary.¶ The saint in this place ad-

* Dominus B. Virgini summum donavit, cujus capax fuit pura creatura, scilicet Dei maternitatem. L. 1, de Laud. Virg. c. 178.

† Esse matrem Dei est gratia maxima puræ creaturæ conferibilis. Ipsa est quam majorem facere non potest Deus, majus cœlum, majorem quam matrem Dei facere non potest. Spec. B. V. Lect. 10.

‡ Luc. i. 49.

§ Non explicat quænam hæc magna fuerint, quia inexplicabilia. Conc. 3, de Nat. Virg.

‖ Propter hanc totus mundus factus est. Serm. 7, in Salv. Reg.

¶ Dispositione tua, Virgo sanctissima, perseverat mundus, quem et tu cum Deo ab initio fundasti. Ap. P. Pep. Lect. 371.

heres to the words of Proverbs, applied by the Church to Mary: I was with him forming all things: "Cum eo eram cuncta componens." * St. Bernardine adds, that God, for love of Mary, did not destroy man after the sin of Adam.† Hence the Church, with reason, sings of Mary: She has chosen the best part: "Optimam partem elegit."‡ For this virgin mother not only chose the best things, but she chose the best part of the best things; the Lord bestowing upon her, in the highest degree, as the blessed Albertus Magnus attests, all the graces, and the general and particular gifts conferred on all other creatures, wholly in consequence of the dignity granted her of becoming mother of God.§ Thus Mary was an infant, but of this state she had only the innocence, but not the defect of incapacity, for from the first moment of life she always had the perfect use of reason. She was a virgin, but without the reproach of sterility. She was a mother, but with the privilege of virginity. She was beautiful, even most beautiful, as Richard of St. Victor asserts, and also St. George of Nicomedia, and St. Dionysius the Areopagite, who, as many believe, once had the happiness of enjoying the sight of her beauty,

* Prov. viii. 30.

† Propter singularissimam dilectionem ad hanc Virginem præservavit. To. 1, Serm. 61. c. 8.

‡ In Off. Ass. B. V.

§ Beatissima Virgo gratia fuit plena, quia omnes gratias generales et speciales omnium creaturarum in summo habuit. Bibl. Ma. in Luc. 13.

and said that if faith had not taught him that she was a creature, he should have adored her as God. And the Lord himself revealed to St. Bridget, that the beauty of his mother surpassed the beauty of all men and angels, allowing the saint to hear him say to Mary: "Thy beauty exceeds that of all the angels, and of all creatures."* She was most beautiful, I repeat, but without injury to those who looked upon her, for her beauty put to flight impure emotions, and suggested even pure thoughts, as St. Ambrose attests: So great grace had she, that she not only preserved her own virginity, but also conferred a remarkable gift of purity on those who beheld her.† And St. Thomas confirms this: The grace of sanctification not only repressed in the Virgin illicit emotions, but also had efficacy for others; so that although she was beautiful in person, she never excited impure desires.‡ Therefore she was called myrrh, which prevents corruption: I yielded a sweet odor like the best myrrh: "Quasi mirrha electa dedi suavitatem odoris;" as the holy Church applies it. She was occupied in active life, but labor did not inter-

* Omnes angelos et omnia quæ creata sunt excessit pulchritudo tua. L. 1. Rev. c. 51.

† Tanta erat sua gratia ut non solum in se virginitatem servaret, sed etiam si quos inviseret, integritatis donum insigne conferret. De Inst. Virg. c. 7.

‡ Gratia sanctificationis non solum repressit in Virgine motus illicitos, sed etiam in aliis efficaciam habuit; ita ut quamvis esset pulchra corpore a nullo concupisceretur. In 3 Dist. disp. 2, q. 2, a. 2

rupt her union with God. In the contemplative life she was recollected in God, but without neglect of the temporal life, and of the charity due to the neighbor. Death came upon her, but without its suffering, and without the corruption of the body.

To conclude then: this divine mother is infinitely inferior to God, but immensely superior to all creatures; and if it is impossible to find a Son more noble than Jesus, it is also impossible to find a mother more noble than Mary. This should cause the servants of such a queen not only to rejoice in her greatness, but also to increase their confidence in her most powerful protection; for, being mother of God, says Father Suarez, she has a certain right to his gifts, to obtain them for those for whom she prays.* St. Germanus, on the other hand, says that God cannot but hear the prayers of this mother, for he cannot but recognize her for his true and immaculate mother. Thus says the saint addressing the Virgin: But thou, who dost prevail with God by a maternal authority, even for those who grievously sin, thou dost obtain the great grace of reconciliation; for thou canst not but be graciously heard, as God in all things conforms to thy wishes as to those of a true and pure mother.† Therefore, oh mother of God, and our

* Unde fit, ut singulare jus habeat ad dona filii sui. To. 2, m 8 p. d. 1, s. 2.

† Tu autem quæ materna in Deum auctoritate polles, etiam iis qui enormiter peccant eximiam reconciliationis gratiam concilias. Non

mother, in thee is not wanting the power to help us. The will, too, is not wanting. Nec facultas, nec voluntas illi deesse potest.* For thou knowest, I will say with thy servant the Abbot of Celles, that God has not created thee for himself alone, but has given thee to the angels for their restorer, to men for their deliverer, and to the demons for their conqueror, for by thy means we recover divine grace, and by thee the enemy is conquered and crushed.†

And if we wish to please the divine mother, let us often salute her by saying the "Hail Mary." One day Mary appeared to St. Matilda, and told her that no one could honor her better than by this salutation; and we shall certainly obtain through it, peculiar graces from this mother of mercy, as will be seen by the following example.

EXAMPLE.

A well-known incident is related by Father Paul Segneri in his "Christian Instructed."‡ A Roman youth, of evil habits and laden with sins, went to confession to Father Niccolas Zucchi. The confessor received him kindly, compassionated his misery, and told him that devotion to the blessed Lady would free him from his accursed

enim potes non exaudiri cum Deus tibi ut veræ ac intemerat matri suæ in omnibus morem gerat. De Zona Virg.

* Serm. de Ass.

† Non tantum sibi te fecit, sed te angelis dedit in instaurationem, hominibus in reparationem, dæmonibus in hostem; nam per te Deus homini pacificatur, diabolus vincitur et conteritur. V. in Prol Cont. Virg.

‡ P. 3, Reg. 34.

vices. He therefore imposed it upon him as a penance, that until the time of his next confession, every morning and evening, on rising and going to bed, he should recite a "Hail Mary" to the Virgin; making an offering to her of his eyes, hands, and his whole body, praying her to keep him as her own; and that he should kiss the ground three times. The young man practised this penance, and at first with very little improvement; but the father continued to exhort him never to give it up, encouraging him to trust in the patronage of Mary. In the mean time, the penitent left home with some other companions, and travelled over the world. Having returned to Rome, he went again to seek his confessor, who to his great joy and surprise, found him entirely changed, and free from his former impurities. "My son," he said, "how have you obtained from God so happy a change?" "Father," answered the youth, "the blessed Virgin, for that little devotion which you taught me, has obtained for me this grace." But the wonder did not cease here. The same confessor related this fact from the pulpit. An officer, who, for several years, had kept up an illicit intercourse with a certain woman, heard it, and proposed also himself to practise the same devotion, in order to free himself from that horrible tie which held him a slave of the devil (which intention is necessary for all such sinners, that the Virgin may aid them): and he also quitted his bad practices and changed his life.

But what followed? At the end of six months, foolishly and too confidently trusting in his strength, he wished, one day, to go and find that woman, to see if she had also changed her way of life. But on approaching the door of her house, where he was in manifest danger of falling again into sin, he felt himself thrust back by an invisible force, and soon found himself distant from the house the whole length of the street, and before his own door; he was then enlightened to see clearly that Mary had thus rescued him from his destruction. Thus we perceive how solicitous is our good mother, not only to save us from sin, if we for that end commend ourselves to her, but also to protect us from the danger of falling into it again.

PRAYER.

Oh immaculate and holy Virgin! oh creature the most humble and the greatest before God! thou wast so small in thy own eyes, but so great in the eyes of thy Lord, that he exalted thee even to choose thee for his mother, and therefore to make thee queen of heaven and of earth. I then thank that God who hath so much exalted thee, and rejoice with thee in seeing thee so closely united to God, that more is not permitted to a pure creature. I am ashamed to appear before thee who art so humble, with so many graces; I, a miserable sinner, and so proud with so many sins. But wretched as I am, I, too,

wish to salute thee: Hail Mary, full of grace: "Ave Maria, gratia plena." Thou art already full of grace; obtain a share of it also for me. The Lord is with thee: "Dominus tecum." The Lord who hath ever been with thee even from the first moment of thy creation, is now more intimately with thee, by making himself thy Son. Blessed art thou among women: "Benedicta tu in mulieribus." Oh woman, blessed among all women, obtain for us also the divine benediction. Oh blessed plant which hath given to the world a fruit so noble and so holy: "Et benedictus fructus ventris tui." Holy Mary, mother of God: "Sancta Maria, mater Dei." Oh Mary, I confess that thou art the true mother of God, and for this truth I would give my life a thousand times. Pray for us sinners: "Ora pro nobis peccatoribus." But if thou art the mother of God, thou art also the mother of our salvation, and of us poor sinners; since it is to save sinners that God made himself man; and he has made thee his mother that thy prayers may have the power to save every sinner. Pray for us, oh Mary. Now and in the hour of our death: "Nunc et in hora mortis nostræ." Pray always; pray now, while we are in life, in the midst of so many temptations and so great danger of losing God; but still more, pray in the hour of our death, when we are on the point of leaving this world and being presented at the divine tribunal; that being saved by the merits of Jesus Christ, and by thy in-

tercession, we may one day come, without the danger of losing thee any more, to salute thee and praise thee, with thy Son, in heaven, for all eternity. Amen.

DISCOURSE V.

ON THE VISITATION OF MARY.

Mary is the treasurer of all the divine graces. Therefore he who desires graces should have recourse to Mary; and he who has recourse to Mary, should be secure of obtaining the graces he wishes.

HAPPY is that house esteemed which is visited by some royal personage, both for the honor it receives from him, and the advantages it hopes for; but more happy should that soul be called which is visited by the queen of the world, most holy Mary, who cannot but fill with mercies and graces those blessed souls whom she deigns to visit with her favors. The house of Obededom was blessed when it was visited by the ark of the Lord: The Lord blessed his house: "Benedixit Dominus domui ejus."* But with how much greater blessings are those persons enriched who receive some loving visit from this living ark of God, as was the divine mother! Happy that house which the mother of God visits,† wrote Engelgrave. This was experienced by the

* 1 Par. † Felix illa domus quam mater Dei visitat

house of the Baptist, wherein scarcely had Mary entered, when she filled all that family with celestial graces and benedictions; and for this reason, the present feast of the Visitation is commonly called the feast of our Lady of graces. We shall consider to-day, in the present discourse, how the divine mother is the treasurer of all graces. We shall divide the discourse into two points. In the first, we shall prove that he who desires graces must have recourse to Mary. In the second, that he who has recourse to Mary, should be certain of obtaining the graces that he desires.

Point First.—After the holy Virgin had heard from the archangel St. Gabriel, that her cousin Elizabeth had been six months pregnant, she was interiorly enlightened by the Holy Spirit to know that the Word which had taken human flesh and had already become her Son, wished to commence manifesting to the world the riches of his mercy, by the first graces that he desired to impart to all that family. Therefore, without interposing any delay, as St. Luke relates: Rising up, Mary went into the mountainous country in haste: "Exurgens abiit in montana cum festinatione."* Rising then from the quiet of her contemplation, to which she was always devoted, and leaving her dear solitude, she immediately set out for the house of Elizabeth. And because holy charity suffers all things: "Charitas omnia suffert;" and can bear no delay, as St. Ambrose remarks, when treating of this

* L. 39.

gospel : The grace of the Holy Spirit knows no slow movements : "Nescit tarda molimina Spiritus Sancti gratia :" therefore not heeding the fatigue of the journey, the tender and delicate maiden quickly set forth on her way. Having arrived at that house, she saluted her cousin : "She entered into the house of Zachary, and saluted Elizabeth."* And as St. Ambrose remarks, Mary was the first to salute Elizabeth : "Prior salutavit." But the visit of the blessed Virgin was not like the visits of the worldly, which, for the most part, consist in ceremonies and false display ; the visit of Mary brought into that house an abundance of graces. For at her first entrance, and at that first salutation, Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and John was delivered from guilt and sanctified, and therefore gave that sign of joy, exulting in the womb of his mother ; for he wished in this way to make known the grace received by means of the blessed Virgin ; as Elizabeth herself declared : "As soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy." So, as Bernardine de Bustis observes, in virtue of the salutation of Mary, John received the grace of the Divine Spirit, who sanctified him : When the blessed Virgin saluted Elizabeth, the voice of the salutation entering through her ears, descended to the child, by virtue of which salutation he received the Holy Spirit.‡

* Et intravit in domum Zachariæ, et salutavit Elisabeth.

† Et facta est vox salutationis tuæ in auribus meis, exultavit in gaudio infami in utero meo.

‡ Cum B. Virgo salutavit Elisabeth, vox salutationis per aures ejus

Now if these first-fruits of the redemption all passed through Mary, and she was the channel by means of which grace was communicated to the Baptist, the Holy Spirit to Elizabeth, the gift of prophecy to Zachary, and so many other blessings to that house, which were the first graces that we know to have been given upon earth by the Word, after he had become incarnate; we have great reason to believe that God, even from that time, had constituted Mary a universal channel, as St. Bernard calls her, through which thenceforth should be dispensed to us all the other graces which the Lord wishes to bestow on us, as it was said in p. 1 c. 5. of this work.

Rightly then is this divine mother called the treasure, the treasurer, and the dispensatrix of divine graces. Thus she is called by the venerable Abbot of Celles: The treasure of the Lord and the treasurer of graces: "Thesaurus Domini, et thesauraria gratiarum."* By St. Peter Damian, also: The treasure of divine graces: "Thesaurus divinarum gratiarum." By blessed Albertus Magnus: The treasurer of Jesus Christ: "Thesauraria Jesu Christi." By St. Bernardine: The dispensatrix of graces: "Dispensatrix gratiarum." By a Greek Doctor, quoted by Petavius:† The store-house of all good things: "Promptuarium omnium bonarum."

ingrediens ad puerum descendit, virtute cujus salutationis puer Spiritum Sanctum accepit. Part 7, Serm. 4.

* Prol. Cont. Virg. c. 1. † De Trin.

Thus, also, St. Gregory Thaumaturgus says: Mary is called so full of grace, because in her the treasure of grace was hidden.* And Richard of St. Laurence says that God has placed in Mary, as in a treasury of mercy, the gifts of all the graces, and from this treasure he enriches his servants.†

St. Bonaventure, speaking of the field of the Gospel where the treasure is hidden which should be bought at any great price, as Jesus Christ hath said: "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in a field, which, when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth the field;"‡ remarks that this field is our Queen Mary, in whom is the treasure of God, that is, Jesus Christ, and with Jesus Christ the source and fountain of all graces.§ St. Bernard also affirms that the Lord has placed in the hands of Mary all the graces that he wishes to dispense to us, that we may know that whatever of good we receive, we receive it all from her hands.‖ And of this Mary herself assures us, when she

* Maria sic gratia plena dicitur, quod in illa gratiæ thesaurus reconderetur.

† Maria est thesaurus quia in ea, ut in gazophylacio, reposuit Dominus omnia dona gratiarum; et de hoc thesauro largitur ipse larga stipendia suis militibus et operariis. De Laud. Virg. l. 4.

‡ Simile est regnum cœlorum thesauro abscondito in agro, quem qui invenit homo, vadit et vendit universa quæ habet, et emit agrum illum. Matth. xiii. 14.

§ Ager iste est Maria, in qua thesaurus Dei Patris absconditus est. Spec. c. 7.

‖ Totius boni plenitudinem posuit in Maria, ut proinde si quid spei

says: In me is all grace of the way and of the truth: "In me gratia omnis viæ et veritatis."* In me are all the graces of true blessings that you men can desire in your life. Yes, our mother and our hope, well do we know, to use the words of St. Peter Damian, that all the treasures of the divine mercies are in thy hands.† And before Damian, St. Ildephonsus asserted it with more force, for addressing the Virgin he said to her: Oh Lady, all the graces which God has determined to bestow upon men, he has determined to dispense by thy hands; and therefore has he committed to thee all the treasure of graces.‡ Hence, oh Mary, concluded St. Germanus, no grace is dispensed to any one except by thy hands; no one is except by thee; no one receives the gift of God except through thee.§ The blessed Albertus Magnus makes a beautiful reflection upon the words of the angel to the most holy Virgin: "Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God,"‖ saying: Oh, Mary, thou hast not stolen grace as Lucifer wishes to steal it; thou hast not lost it as Adam lost it;

in nobis est, si quid gratiæ, si quid salutis, ab ea noverimus redundare. Serm. de Aq æd.

* Eccli. xxiv. 25.

† In manibus tuis omnes thesauri miserationum Dei.

‡ Omnia bona quæ illis summa majestas decrevit facere, tuis manibus decrevit commendare; commissi quippe tibi sunt thesauri et ornamenta gratiarum. In Cor. Virg. cap. 15.

§ Nemo qui salvus fiet, nisi per te; nemo donum Dei suscipit, nisi per te. Serm. de Zona Virg.

‖ Ne timeas, Maria invenisti enim gratiam apud Deum. Luc. 1. 30.

thou hast not bought it as Simon the Magician wished to buy it; but thou hast found it because thou hast desired and sought it. Thou hast found the uncreated grace, that is, God himself, become thy Son; and at the same time thou hast found and obtained all created good.* St. Peter Chrysologus confirms this thought, by saying that the great mother found this grace by restoring salvation to all men.† And elsewhere he says, that Mary found grace in its fulness, sufficient to save all men.‡ In the like manner as God made the sun, says Richard of St. Laurence, that by it the earth may be illuminated, so hath he created Mary, that by her means all divine mercies may be dispensed to the world.§ And St. Bernardine adds that the Virgin, as soon as she was made mother of the Redeemer, acquired, as it were, a jurisdiction over all graces: when the Virgin Mary conceived the Word of God in her womb, she obtained, as I should say, a certain jurisdiction over all the temporal manifestations of the Holy Spirit; so that no creature obtained any grace from God,

* Ne timeas, quia invenisti. Non rapuisti, ut primus angelus; non perdidisti, ut primus parens; non emisti ut Simon Magus; sed invenisti, quia quæsivisti. Invenisti gratiam increatam et in illa omnem creaturam. In Marial. c. 237.

† Hanc gratiam accepit Virgo salutem sæculis redditura. Serm. 3, de Ann.

‡ Invenisti gratiam, quantam? quantam superius dixerat, plenam et vere plenam, quæ largo imbre totam funderet, et infunderet creaturam. Serm. 142.

§ Sicut sol factus est, ut illuminat totum mundum: sic Maria facta est, ut misericordiam impetret toti mundo. De Laud. Virg. lib. 7.

unless according to the disposal of this pious mother.*

Let us conclude this point in the words of Richard of St. Laurence, who says, that if we wish to obtain any grace, we must have recourse to Mary, who cannot but obtain for her servants whatever she demands; since she has found, and always will find, divine grace.† And this he took from St. Bernard, who said: Let us seek grace, and let us seek it through Mary, for what she seeks she finds, and cannot be frustrated.‡ If, then, we desire graces, we must go to this treasurer and dispensatrix of graces; for this is the sovereign will of the Giver of every good, as St. Bernard himself assures us, that all graces are dispensed by the hands of Mary.§ All, all, Totum, totum; he who says all, excludes nothing. But, because confidence is necessary in order to obtain grace, we now will pass on to consider how certain we should be of obtaining graces, if we have recourse to Mary.

Second Point.—And why should Jesus Christ

* A tempore quo Virgo mater concepit in utero verbum Dei, quandam ut sic dicam, jurisdictionem obtinuit in omni Spiritus Sancti processione temporali; ita ut nulla creatura aliquam a Deo obtinuit gratiam, nisi secundum ipsius piæ matris dispensationem. Serm. 61, Tract. 1, Art. 8.

† Cupientes invenire gratiam, quæramus inventricem gratiæ, quæ quia semper invenit, frustrari non potest. De Laud. Virg. l. 2, p. 5.

‡ Quæramus gratiam, et per Mariam quæramus; quia quod quærit, invenit, et frustrari non potest. Serm. de Aquæd.

§ Quia sic est voluntas ejus, qui totum nos habere voluit per Mariam. Loc. cit.

ever have placed in the hands of this his mother all the riches of the mercies which he wishes to use for our benefit, if not that she may enrich with them all her servants who love and honor her, and with confidence recur to her? With me are riches . . . . that I may enrich them that love me: "Mecum sunt divitiæ . . . . ut ditem diligentes me."* Thus the Virgin herself speaks in this passage, which the holy Church applies to her on so many of her festivals. Therefore, for no other use, but for our benefit, says Adam the Abbot, are the riches of eternal life preserved by Mary, in whose bosom the Saviour has deposited the treasure of the wretched, that, supplied from this treasure, the poor may become rich.† And St. Bernard adds, as I learn from another author, that for this purpose Mary has been given to the world, for a channel of mercy, that by her means graces may continually descend from heaven upon men.‡

From this the holy Father goes on to ask, why St. Gabriel, having found the divine mother already full of grace, according to his salutation: Hail, full of grace: "Ave gratia plena:" afterwards says that the Holy Spirit was to come to her, to fill her still more with grace; if she was already full of this grace, what more

* Prov. viii. 18, 21.

† Divitiæ salutis penes Virginem nostris usibus reservantur. Christus in Virginis utero pauperum gazophylacium collocavit; inde pauperes locupletati sunt. In. Alleg. utr. Test. c. 24. Eccli.

‡ Ad hoc enim data est ipsa mundo quasi aquæductus, ut per ipsam a Deo ad homines dona cœlestia jugiter descenderent.

could the coming of the Holy Spirit effect? Mary was already full of grace, thus answers St. Bernard, but the Holy Spirit came upon her for our good, that from her superabundance we poor sinners might be provided.* For this reason Mary was called the moon, of which it is said: the moon is full, for herself and others: "Luna plena sibi, et aliis."

"He that shall find me, shall find life, and shall have salvation from the Lord."† Blessed is he who having recourse to me finds me, says our mother. He will find life, and will find it easily; for, as it is easy to find and draw water (as much as one wishes) from a great fountain, so it is easy to find graces and eternal salvation by going to Mary. A holy soul hath said, we have only to ask graces of our Lady and we shall have them. And St. Bernard says, that before Mary was born, the world was without this abundance of graces, that now are overflowing the earth, because this desirable channel (Mary) was wanting.‡ But now that we actually have this mother of mercy, what graces can we not obtain, if we cast ourselves at her feet? I am the city of refuge, thus St. John of Damascus makes her to say, for all those who have re-

* Ad quid nisi, ut, adveniente jam Spiritu plena sibi, eodem superveniente, nobis quoque superplena et superefluens fiat? Serm. 2. de Ass.

† Qui me invenerit, inveniet vitam, en hauriet salutem a Domino, Prov. viii. 35.

‡ Propterea tanto tempore humano generi fluenta gratiæ defuerunt quod necdum intercederet is tam desiderabilis aquæductus. Serm. de Aquæd.

course to me: come, then, my children, and you will obtain from me graces, in greater abundance than you can imagine.*

It is true that many experience what the venerable Sister Maria Villani saw in a heavenly vision. This servant of God once saw the mother of God in the likeness of a great fountain, to which many went to draw the waters of graces; but what then happened? Those who carried vessels which were whole, preserved afterwards the graces received; but those who caryied broken vessels, that is, souls laden with sins, received the graces, but quickly lost them again. As for the rest, it is certain that by means of Mary, men, even the most ungrateful and wretched sinners, daily obtain innumerable graces. St. Augustine says, addressing the Virgin: Through thee the wretched obtain mercy, the ungrateful grace, sinners pardon, the weak support, the earthly heavenly things, mortals life, and travellers their country.†

Let our confidence, then, ever revive, oh devoted servants of Mary, as often as we have recourse to her for graces. And to revive this confidence, let us ever remember the two great privileges which this good mother possesses, namely: the desire she has to do us good, and

* Ego civitas refugii iis, qui ad me confugiunt; accedite, et gratiarum dona affluentissime haurite. Serm. 2, de Dorm. B. V.

† Per te hæreditamus misericordiam miseri, ingrati gratiam, veniam peccatores, sublimia infirmi, cœlestia terreni, mortales vitam, et patriam peregrini. Serm. de Ass. B. V.

the power she has with her Son to obtain whatever she asks. That we may know the desire Mary has to aid all, it would be sufficient only to consider the mystery of the present festival, namely, the visit of Mary to Elizabeth. The journey from Nazareth, where the most holy Virgin lived, to the city of Hebron (called by St. Luke a city of Judah), where, according to Baronius and other authors, Elizabeth dwelt, was about sixty-nine miles, as the author of the life of Mary, Father Giuseppe of Jesus, one of the barefooted Carmelites, asserts,* as also Bede and Brocardo. But this did not prevent the blessed Virgin, tender and delicate as she then was, and not accustomed to such efforts, from immediately setting forth—moved by what? —moved by that great charity with which her most tender heart was ever filled, to go and commence from that time her great office of dispenser of graces. Precisely thus does St. Ambrose speak of this her journey: She did not go as if incredulous of the announcement, but happy in her desire, hastening for joy, and intent upon her office.† Not that Mary, as the saint says, went to inform herself of the truth of what the angel had told her concerning Elizabeth, but joyful through her desire to help that household, hastening for the joy she felt to do good to others, and wholly intent on that charitable errand. Rising up, she went with

* L. 3, c. 12.

† Non abiit quasi incredula de oraculo, sed quasi læta pro voto, festina præ gaudio, religiosa pro officio. In. c. 1, Luc.

haste: "Exurgens abiit cum festinatione."* Here let it be observed that the Evangelist, when he spoke of Mary going to the house of Elizabeth, said that she went in haste: Abiit festinatione; but speaking of her return from that house, he makes no more mention of haste, but simply says: "And Mary abode with her about three months, and she returned to her own house."* What other object, then, says St. Bonaventure, caused the mother of God to hasten when going to visit the house of the Baptist, except the desire to do good to that family?†

Certainly, since the assumption of Mary into heaven, this her affection of charity towards men has not ceased; nay, it has ever been increasing, for there she better knows our necessities, and feels more pity for our miseries. Bernardine de Bustis writes, that Mary more earnestly desires to do us good than we desire to receive it from her.‡ To such a degree, that St. Bonaventure says, she considers herself injured by those who do not ask favors of her;§ for this is the desire of Mary, to enrich all with her graces; for, indeed, according to the assertion of the Idiot, she superabundantly enriches her servants.‖

* Mansit autem Maria cum illa quasi mensibus tribus; et reversa est in domum suam. Luc. i. 56.

† Quid eam ad officium charitatis festinare cogebat, nisi charitas quæ in corde fervebat? Spec. c. 54.

‡ Pius vult illa bonum tibi facere, et largiri gratiam, quam tu accipere concupiscas. Mar. p. 1, Serm. 5.

§ In te, Domina, peccant non solum qui tibi injuriam irrogant, sed etiam qui te non rogant. In Spec. Virg.

‖ Maria thesaurus Domini est, et thesauraria gratiarum ipsius.

Hence the same author says, that he who finds Mary finds every good : "Inventa Maria, invenitur omne bonum." And he adds, that every one can find her, were he even the most abandoned sinner in the world; for she is so gracious that she sends away none who have recourse to her.* I invite all to come to me, Thomas à Kempis makes her say, I wait for all, I wish that all may come ; neither do I ever despise any sinner who comes to seek my help, however unworthy he may be.† All who go to her asking favors, says Richard, will find her always ready, always inclined to succor them, and obtain for them every grace of eternal salvation by her powerful prayers : "Inveniet semper paratam auxiliari."

I have said by her powerful prayers, for this is the other reflection which should increase our confidence, namely, knowing that she obtains from God whatever she asks in favor of her servants. Observe especially, says St. Bonaventure, in this visit that Mary made to Elizabeth, the great virtue of the words of Mary ; for at the sound of her voice the grace of the Holy Spirit was given to Elizabeth as well as to her son, as the Evangelist has written : "And it came to pass that when Elizabeth heard the sal-

Donis specialibus ditat copiosissime servientes sibi. In Prol. Cant. B. V. c. 1.

* Tanta est ejus benignitas, quod nulli formidandum est ad eam accidere. Tantaque misericordia, quod ab ea nemo repellitur.

† Omnes invito, omnes expecto, omnes desidero, nullum peccatorem despicio.

utation of Mary, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost."* On which St. Bonaventure remarks: Behold, how great is the virtue of the words of our Lady, for at the sound of them the Holy Spirit is given.† Theophilus of Alexandria says that Jesus is much pleased when Mary prays to him for us, for then all the graces which he bestows on us through the supplications of Mary, he does not consider to be conferred on us, but rather on Mary herself.‡ And let these words be noted: Persuaded by the prayers of his mother he gives: "Precibus suæ genitricis evictus, donat." Yes, because Jesus, as St. Germanus attests, cannot but graciously hear Mary in all her petitions, wishing in this, as it were, to obey her as his true mother; hence the saint says that the prayers of this mother have a certain authority with Jesus Christ, so that she obtains pardon even for the greatest sinners, who commend themselves to her.§

And this is indeed confirmed, as St. John Chrysostom observes, by what took place at the

* Et factum est, ut audivit salutationem Mariæ Elisabeth, exultavit infans in utero ejus; et repleta est Spiritu Sancto Elisabeth. Luc. i. 41,

† Vide quanta virtus sit verbis Dominæ, quia ad eorum pronuntiationem confertur Spiritus Sanctus. Tract, de Vit. Christ.

‡ Gaudet filius, orante matre, quia omnia quæ nobis precibus suæ genetricis evictus donat, ipsi matri se donasse putat. Ap. Baldi Giard di Mar. nella Pref.

§ Tu autem materna in Deum auctoritate pollens, etiam iis, qui enormiter peccant, eximiam remissionis gratiam concilias. Non enim potes non exaudiri, cum Deus tibi ut veræ et intemeratæ matri in omnibus morem gerat. Or. de Dorm. V.

nuptials of Cana, where Mary, asking of her Son the wine that was wanting, said: "They have no wine;" Jesus answered: "Woman, what is that to me and to thee ? my hour is not yet come."* But although the time for miracles has not yet arrived, as Chrysostom and Theophilactus explain; yet, says the same Chrysostom, our Saviour, in order to obey his mother, performed the miracle she requested, and converted the water into wine.†

"Let us go therefore," thus the apostle exhorts us, "with confidence to the throne of grace; that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid."‡ The throne of grace is the blessed Virgin Mary, says the blessed Albertus Magnus: "Thronus gratiæ est beata Virgo Maria." § If, then, we wish for graces, let us go to the throne of grace, which is Mary; and let us go with the hope of being certainly heard; for we have the intercession of Mary, who obtains whatever she asks of her Son. Let us ask for grace, I repeat with St. Bernard, and through Mary let us ask: "Quæramus gratiam et per Mariam quæramus," trusting to what the Virgin mother said to St. Matilda, that the Holy Spirit, filling her with all his sweetness, had

* Vinum non habent . . . . Quid mihi et tibi est mulier? nondum venit hora mea. Jo. ii. 3, 4.

† Et licet ita responderit, maternis tamen votis obtemperavit. S. Jo. Chrys. Hom. 21, in Joan.

‡ Adeamus ergo cum fiducia ad thronum gratiæ, ut misericordiam consequamur, et gratiam inveniamus in auxilio opportuno. Hebr. iv. 16.

§ Serm. de Ded. Eccl.

rendered her so dear to God that every one who, through her intercession, asked for graces, would certainly obtain them. *

And if we give credit to that celebrated saying of St. Anselm: We shall sometimes find grace sooner by having recourse to Mary, than by having recourse to our Saviour Jesus himself;† not that he is not the source and Lord of all graces, but because if we go to Mary, and she intercedes for us, her prayers will have more power, as the prayers of a mother, than ours. Let us never then leave the feet of this treasurer of graces, but say to her with St. John Damascene: Open to us, oh blessed mother of God, the door of thy mercy, for thou art the salvation of the human race.‡ Oh mother of God, open to us the door of thy mercy, by praying always for us; for thy prayers are the salvation of all men. And when we have recourse to Mary, it would be best to ask her to pray for us, and obtain for us those graces which she knows are most expedient for our salvation; which is precisely what Brother Reginald, a Dominican, did, as is related in the chronicles of the order.§ This servant of Mary was infirm, and asked of her the grace of bodily health. Our Lady appear-

* Spiritus Sanctus tota sua dulcedine me penetrando, tam gratiosam effecit, ut omnis qui per me gratiam quærit, ipsam inveniat. Ap. Canis. l. 1, c. 13.

† Velocior est nonnunquam salus nostra, invocato nomine Mariæ, quam invocato nomine Jesu. De Exc. Virg. c. 6.

‡ Misericordiæ januam aperi nobis, benedicta Deipara tu enim es salus generis humani.

§ L. 1, p. 1, c. 5.

ed to him, accompanied by St. Cecilia and St. Catherine, and said to him with the greatest sweetness: "My son, what shall I do for thee?" The religious at this kind offer of Mary was troubled, and knew not what to answer. Then one of those saints gave him this counsel: "Reginald, do you know what you should do? Do not ask for any thing, place every thing at her disposal, because Mary knows how to obtain for thee a grace greater than you could ask." The sick brother followed her advice, and the divine mother obtained for him the grace of health.

But if we also desire the happy visits of this queen of heaven, it will greatly aid us if we often visit her before some image, or in some church dedicated to her. Let us read the following example, and learn with what special favors she rewards the devout visits of her servants.

EXAMPLE.

It is related in the Franciscan chronicles, that two religious of that order, who were going to visit a sanctuary of the Virgin, were overtaken by night in a great wood, where they became bewildered and so troubled that they knew not what to do. But advancing a little, they discerned through the darkness something which seemed to them a house. They went groping along with outstretched hands, and at length touched a wall; they found the door, knocked, and heard some one within asking who they were? They answered that they were two poor religious

who had lost their way by accident in that wood, and were seeking a shelter, that at least they might not be devoured by wolves. But suddenly they heard the door open, and saw two pages richly dressed, who received them with great courtesy. The religious asked them who inhabited that palace? The pages answered that a very kind, good Lady inhabited it. We wish to pay our respects to her, said they, and thank her for her charity. We will take you to her, said the pages, for she too wishes to speak to you. They ascended the stairs, found the apartments all illuminated, richly furnished, and perfumed as with an odor of paradise; they finally entered the apartment of the Lady, who was majestic and most lovely in her appearance, and who welcomed them with the greatest kindness, and then asked them in what direction they were travelling? They answered that they were going to visit a certain church of the blessed Virgin. If that is the case, said the Lady, when you go I will give you a letter from myself, which will greatly aid you. And whilst the Lady was speaking to them, they felt all inflamed with love of God, and filled with a joy such as they had never before experienced. They afterwards went to rest, if perchance they could sleep in the midst of so much joy, and in the morning they went again to take leave of the Lady of the mansion, thank her, and at the same time receive the letter, they did so and departed. But when they had gone a little distance from the house, they perceived

that there was no superscription to the letter; but they turned and returned, and could not find the house again. At last they opened the letter, to see to whom it was sent, and what it contained, and found that it was from the most holy Mary, and was written to themselves, and let them know that she was the Lady whom they saw the night before, and that on account of the devotion they cherished for her, she had provided a house and refreshment for them in that wood. She exhorted them to continue to serve and love her, for she would well reward their devotion, and assist them in life and in death. At the bottom of the letter they read the signature of the Virgin Mary. We may easily imagine the thanks that those good religious offered to the divine mother, and how greatly they were inflamed with the desire of loving her and serving her to the end of their lives.

PRAYER.

Immaculate and blessed Virgin, since thou art the universal dispenser of all divine graces, therefore thou art the hope of all, and also my hope. I always thank my Lord that he hath given me to know thee, and the means that I must use to obtain graces and save myself. Thou art this means, oh great mother of God, for I now understand that it is principally through the merits of Jesus Christ, and after those, through thy intercession, that I am to be

saved. Ah, my queen, thou didst make so great haste to visit, and sanctify with thy visit, the house of Elizabeth; ah, visit, and visit quickly the poor house of my soul. Ah, hasten! thou knowest better than I how poor it is, how infected with many maladies, with irregular affections, bad habits, and actual sin, all those fatal diseases which will bring it to eternal death. Thou canst enrich it, oh treasurer of God ! and thou canst heal all its infirmities. Visit me then in life, and visit me especially at the hour of my death, for then thy help will be more necessary to me. I do not, indeed expect, neither am I worthy that thou shouldst visit me on this earth with thy visible presence, as thou hast done to so many of thy servants, but servants not so unworthy and ungrateful as I am. I will be content to be allowed then to see thee in thy kingdom of heaven, there to love thee better, and thank thee for whatever good thou hast done me. At present I will be content that thou shouldst visit me with thy mercies. It is enough that thou dost pray for me.

Pray for me then oh Mary, and commend me to thy Son. Thou knowest better than now myself, my miseries and my necessities. What more would I say to thee? Have pity on me. I am so miserable and ignorant that I do not even know, and cannot even ask, the graces that are most necessary for me. Oh my queen and most sweet mother, ask thou and obtain for me, from thy Son, those graces which thou knowest

to be most useful and necessary for my soul. Into thy hands I entirely abandon myself, and only pray the divine Majesty, that through the merits of my Saviour Jesus, he may grant me those graces that thou dost ask of him for me. Ask, ask then for me, oh most holy Virgin, whatever thou esteemest best. Thy prayers are never rejected. They are the prayers of a mother to a Son, who loves thee so much, and finds his joy in granting whatever thou dost ask of him, thus the more to honor thee, and at the same time, show thee the great love he bears thee. Oh Lady, thus let it be. I will live trusting in thee. Thou must think only on saving me. Amen.

DISCOURSE VI.

ON THE PURIFICATION OF MARY.

The great sacrfice which Mary this day made to God in offering him the life of her Son.

THERE were two precepts of the ancient law concerning the birth of first-born sons. One was, that the mother should remain as an unclean person, retired in her house, for forty days; after which she should go to purify herself in the temple. The other was, that the parents of the first-born should take him to the temple, and there offer him to God. On this day the most holy Virgin desired to obey both

precepts. Although Mary was not bound by the law of purification, since she was always a virgin, and always pure; yet, by her love of humility and odedience, she wished to go, like other mothers, to be purified. At the same time she obeyed the second precept, to present and offer her Son to the eternal Father: "And after the days of her purification, according to the law of Moses, were accomplished, they carried him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord."* But the Virgin offered him in a different manner from that in which other mothers offered their sons. Others offered them, but they knew that this was a simple ceremony of the law, through which, by redeeming them, they made them their own, without the fear that they should be obliged to offer them again, and to death. Mary really offered her Son to death, knowing certainly that the sacrifice of the life of Jesus which she then made, should one day be actually consummated upon the altar of the cross; so that Mary, by offering the life of her Son through the love she bore this Son, really sacrificed herself entirely to God. Laying aside, then, all the other considerations which we might make upon the various mysteries of this festival, let us only consider how great was this sacrifice that Mary made of herself to God, by offering to him, on this day, the life of her Son. And this will be the only subject of the following discourse.

* Et postquam impleti sunt dies purgationis ejus, secundum legem Moysi, tulerunt illum in Jerusalem, ut sisterent eum Domino. Luc. ii. 22.

The eternal Father had already determined to save man, who was lost through sin, and free him from eternal death. But because he wished that, at the same time, his divine justice should not be defrauded of a full and due satisfaction, he did not spare the life of his own Son, already made man in order to redeem man; but he required that he should pay, to its most rigorous extent, the penalty merited by men: "He that spared not even his own Son," says the apostle, "but delivered him up for us all."* He sent him therefore on the earth to become man, destined for him a mother, and chose the Virgin Mary; but as he did not wish his divine Word to become her Son before she accepted him by her express consent, so he did not wish that Jesus should sacrifice his life for the salvation of men without the concurrence of the consent of Mary, that together with the sacrifice of the life of the Son, the heart of the mother might be sacrificed also. St. Thomas teaches, that the relation of mother gives an especial right over her children; hence Jesus, being innocent in himself and not deserving any punishment for his own sins, it seemed fitting that he should not be destined to the cross as the victim for the sins of the world without the consent of his mother, by which she should voluntarily offer him to death.

But although Mary, from the moment she was made mother of Jesus, gave her consent to his

* Qui proprio filio suo non pepercit, sed pro nobis omnibus, tradidit illum. Rom. viii. 32.

death, yet the Lord wished her, on this day, to make, in the temple, a solemn sacrifice of herself, by offering solemnly her Son, and sacrificing to the divine justice his precious life. Hence St. Epiphanius called her a priest: "Virginem appello velut sacerdotem."* Now we begin to see how much this sacrifice cost her, and what heroic virtue she was obliged to practise when she had herself to sign the sentence of condemnation of her dear Jesus to death.

Now behold Mary actually on her way to Jerusalem to offer her Son; she hastens her steps towards the place of sacrifice, and she herself carries her beloved victim in her arms. She enters the temple, approaches the altar, and there, filled with modesty, humility, and devotion, she presents her Son to the Most High. At this moment St. Simeon, who had received the promise from God that he should not die before seeing the expected Messias, takes the divine child from the hands of the Virgin, and, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, announces to her how much sorrow this sacrifice must cause her, this sacrifice which she was about to make of her Son, with whom must her blessed soul also be sacrificed. Here St. Thomas of Villanova contemplates the holy old man, who, when he had come to announce the fatal prophecy to this poor mother, is agitated and silent.† Then the saint considers Mary, who asks: Why, oh Simeon, in the time of so great consolation, are you thus disturbed?

* Or. de Laud. Deip. † Serm. de Purific. Virg.

"Unde tanta turbatio?" To whom he answers: Oh, noble and holy Virgin, I wished not to announce to thee such bitter tidings, but since the Lord wishes it thus, for thy greater merit, hear what I say to thee.* This infant who now causes thee, and with reason, so much joy, oh God, shall one day bring thee the most cruel suffering that any creature has ever experienced in the world; and this will be when thou shalt see him persecuted by men of every sort, and placed on earth as the mark of their sneers and derision, even until he is put to death before thy eyes.† Know that after his death there will be many martyrs who, for love of this thy Son, will be tormented and slain; but if their martyrdom will be of the body, thy martyrdom, oh divine mother, will be of the heart.‡

Yes, of the heart, for nothing but compassion for the sufferings of this Son so dear could be meant by the sword of sorrow that St. Simeon predicted was to pierce the heart of the mother: "And thy own soul a sword shall pierce."§ Already the most holy Virgin, as St. Jerome says, had been enlightened through the divine Scriptures to know the sufferings which the Redeemer was to endure in his life, and still more at the time of his death. She well understood

* O Virgo regia, nollem tibi talia nuntiare, sed audi. Serm. de Purific. Virg.

† Nimium nunc pro isto infante læteris, sed ecce iste positus in signum cui contradicetur.

‡ O quot millia hominum pro ipso puero laniabuntur, et jugulabuntur; et si omnes patientur in corpore, tu Virgo in corde patieris. Loc. cit.

§ Et tuam ipsius animam doloris gladius pertransibit. Luc. ii. 35.

from the prophets, that he was to be betrayed by one of his friends: "Who ate my bread hath greatly supplanted me;"* as David predicted. Abandoned by his disciples: Strike the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: "Percute Pastorem, et dispergentur oves."† Well did she know the insults, spitting, blows, and derision that he was to suffer from the people: "I have given my body to the strikers, and my cheeks to them that plucked them; I have not turned away my face from them that rebuked me and spit upon me."‡ She knew that he was to become the scandal of men, and the outcast of the lowest of the people: "But I am a worm and no man, the reproach of men and the outcast of the people,"§ even to be laden with insults and outrages: "He shall be filled with reproaches."‖ She knew that at the end of his life his sacred flesh would be torn and bruised by scourges: "He was wounded from our iniquities, he was bruised for our sins,"¶ so that his body would be wholly disfigured by them, become as a leper, all sores: "There is no beauty in him, nor comeliness, and we have thought him, as it were, a leper,"**even till the bones were uncovered:

* Qui edebat panes meos, magnificavit super me supplantationem. Psal. xl. 10.

† Zacc. xiii. 7.

‡ Corpus meum dedi percutientibus, et genas meas vellentibus, faciem meam non averti ab increpantibus, et conspuentibus in me. Isa. l. 6.

§ Ego autem sum vermis et non homo; opprobrium hominum et abjectio plebis. Psal. xxi. 7.

‖ Saturabitur opprobriis. Thren. 3.

¶ Ipse autem vulneratus est propter iniquitates nostras, attritus est propter scelera nostra. Isa. liii. 5.

** Non est species ei neque decor . . . . Et nos putavimus eum quasi leprosum. Isa. liii. 2, 4.

"They have numbered all my bones."* She knew that he was to be pierced by nails.† That he was to be reputed with the wicked.‡ And that finally he was to die, hanging on the cross, slain for the salvation of men: "And they shall look upon me whom they have pierced."§

Mary, I repeat, already knew all the sufferings that her Son was to endure, but in the above quoted words of St. Simon: "And thy own soul a sword shall pierce," as the Lord revealed to St. Theresa, all the minute circumstances of the external as well as internal sufferings which her Lord Jesus was to endure in his passion, were made known to her. She consented to all with a firmness which made the angels wonder, and pronounced the sentence that her Son should die, and die by a death so ignominious and painful, in these words: Eternal Father, since thou dost will it, not my will, but thine be done: "Non mea voluntas, sed tua fiat;" I unite mine to thy holy will, and sacrifice to thee this my Son; I am satsified that he should lose his life for thy glory, and for the salvation of the world. And I also sacrifice to thee my heart; let grief pierce it as much as pleases thee; it suffices to me that thou, oh my God, art glorified and satisfied; not my will, but thine be done. Oh, charity without measure! oh, constancy without example! oh, victory, that merits the eternal admiration of heaven and of earth!

* Dinumeraverunt omnia ossa mea. Psal. xxi. 18.
† Foderunt manus meas et pedes meas. Loc. cit.
‡ Et cum sceleratis reputatus est. Isa. liii. 12.
§ Et aspicient ad me quem confixerunt. Zacc. xii. 10

And hence Mary, in the passion of Jesus was silent when he was unjustly accused; she said nothing to Pilate, who was inclined to liberate him, for he had already known his innocence; but she only appeared in the public to be present at the great sacrifice, which was to be offered on Calvary. She accompanied him to the place of punishment ; she was with him from the first moment he was placed upon the cross: There stood by the cross of Jesus his mother: "Stabat juxta crucem Jesu mater ejus;" until she saw him expire, and the sacrifice was consummated. And all this to complete the offering which she had already made of him to God in the temple.

In order to understand the violence that Mary had to offer herself in making this sacrifice, it would be necessary to comprehend the love which this mother bore to Jesus. Generally speaking, the love of mothers is so tender for their children, that when they are at the point of death, and they are about to lose them, they forget all their faults, their defects, and even the injuries they have received from them, and they suffer an inexpressible grief. And yet the love of those mothers is a love divided among other children, or among other creatures. Mary has one only Son, and he is the most beautiful of all the children of Adam; he is most amiable, for he has all lovable qualities; he is obedient, virtuous, innocent, holy, in one word, he is God. The love of this mother too

is not divided among other objects; she has centered all her love upon this only Son, neither does she fear loving him to excess, for this Son is God, who merits an infinite love. And this Son is the victim whom she had voluntarily to offer to death.

Let every one consider, then, how much it must have cost Mary to sacrifice on the cross the life of a Son so amiable, and what strength of mind she must have exercised in this act. Behold the most fortunate of mothers, because she is the mother of a God, but she is at the same time a mother most worthy of compassion, because the most afflicted; being the mother of a Son whom she saw destined to the cross from the day when he was given her for a Son! What mother would accept a son, knowing that afterwards she should lose him by such a painful and infamous death, and that she should be present to see him die? Mary willingly accepted this Son with so hard a condition; and not only accepted him, but offers him herself this day, with her own hands, to death, sacrificing him to the divine justice. St. Bonaventure says, that the blessed Virgin would willingly have taken upon herself the sufferings and death of her Son; but to obey God she made the great offering of the divine life of her beloved Jesus, conquering, but with the greatest grief, all the tenderness of love that she bore him.* Hence

* Si fieri potuisset, omnia tormenta quæ filius pertulit, sustinuisset; et nihilominus placuit ei quod unigenitus ejus pro salute generis humani offerretur. In p. 1, Dist. 48, q. 2.

it is, that in this offering Mary had to do more violence to herself, and was more generous, than if she had offered herself to suffer all her Son was to suffer. Therefore she surpassed all the martyrs in generosity, for the martyrs offered their own lives; but the Virgin offered the life of her Son, whom she loved and esteemed infinitely more than her own life.

Neither did the suffering of this painful offering end here; rather it commenced here; for from that time forward, through the whole life of her Son, Mary had always before her eyes death, and all the pains he was to suffer in his death. Hence, the more this Son discovered to her how beautiful, graceful, and amiable he was, so much more did the anguish of her heart constantly increase. Ah, afflicted mother! if thou hadst loved thy Son less, or if thy Son had been less lovely, and had loved thee less, thy suffering would certainly have been less in offering him to death. But there never has been, and there never will be, a more loving mother than thou, because there never has been, and never will be, a son more amiable and more loving towards his mother than thy Jesus. Oh God! if we had seen the beauty, the majesty of countenance of that divine child, could we have had the courage to sacrifice his life for our salvation? And thou, oh Mary! who art his mother, and a mother so loving, couldst thou offer thy innocent Son for the salvation of men, to a death more painful and more cruel than any criminal had ever endured on this earth?

Alas! what a fearful scene from that day forward did love continually place before the eyes of Mary, representing to her all the injuries and mockeries which were to be offered to her poor Son! Behold love already representing him to her in his agony in the garden, then torn by scourges, and crowned with thorns in the hall of Pilate, and finally hanging from the infamous wood on Calvary! Behold, oh mother, said love, what a lovely and innocent Son thou hast offered to such sufferings, and to so dreadful a death! And of what avail will it be to thee to rescue him from the hands of Herod, in order to reserve him for so piteous an end?

Thus Mary not only offered her Son to death in the temple, but was offering him up at every moment of her life; for she revealed to St. Bridget, that this grief which St. Simeon announced to her, never left her heart till she was assumed into heaven.* Hence St. Anselm says: Oh Lady, I cannot believe, that with such a sorrow thou wouldst have been able to live one moment, if God himself, who gives life, had not strengthened thee by his divine power.† And St. Bernard affirms, speaking of the great sorrow that Mary endured on this day, that henceforth she suffered a living death, bearing a grief more cruel than death.‡ She lived, dying at

* Dolor iste, usquedum assumpta fui corpore et anima in cœlum, nunquam deficit a corde meo.

† Pia Domina, non crediderim te ullo puncto potuisse stimulos tanti cruciatus, quin vitam emitteres, sustinere, nisi ipse spiritus vitæ te confortasset.

‡ Moriebatur vivens, dolorem ferens morte crudeliorem.

every moment, because grief for the death of her beloved Jesus, which was more cruel than any death, was at every moment assailing her.

The divine mother then, on account of the great merit she acquired in this great sacrifice, which she made to God for the salvation of the world, was justly called by St. Augustine: The restorer of the human race: "Reparatrix generis humani."* By St. Epiphanius: The redeemer of captives: "Redemptrix captivorum."† By St. Ildephonsus: The restorer of the ruined world: "Reparatrix perditi orbis."‡ By St. Germanus: The consolation of our miseries: "Restauratio calamitatum nostrarum."§ By St. Ambrose: The mother of all believers: "Mater omnium credentium."‖ By St. Augustine: The mother of the living: "Mater viventium." ¶ By St. Andrew of Crete: The mother of life: "Mater vitæ."** For, as St. Arnold Carnotensis says: In the death of Jesus, Mary united her will to that of her Son in such a manner, that both offered the same sacrifice; and therefore the holy abbot says, that thus the Son and the mother effected human redemption, obtaining salvation for men.†† Jesus by satisfying for our sins, Mary by obtaining for us that this satisfaction should be applied to us. And hence blessed Denis the

* De Fide. ad Petr.
† De Laud. Virg.
‡ Serm. 1, de Ass.
§ In Exc. Virg
‖ Ap. S. Bon. Spec. c. 20.
¶ Serm. 2, de Ass.
** Hom. 2, Ass.

†† Omnino tunc erat una Christi et Mariæ voluntas, unumque holocaustum ambo pariter offerebant; unde communem in mundi salute cum illo effectum ostendit. Tr. de Laud. Virg.

Carthusian likewise affirms, that the divine mother may be called the salvation of the world, since by the pain she endured in commiserating her Son (voluntarily sacrificed by her to divine justice), she merited that the merits of the Redeemer should be communicated to men.*

Mary, then, having been made the mother of all the redeemed, by the merit of her sufferings, and of the offering of her Son; it is just to believe that only by her hand may be given them the milk of those divine graces, which are the fruits of the merits of Jesus Christ, and the means to obtain life eternal. And it is to this that St. Bernard alludes, when he says that God has placed in the hands of Mary the whole price of our redemption.† By which the saint gives us to understand, that by means of the intercession of the blessed Virgin, the merits of the Redeemer are applied to souls, as by her hand these graces are dispensed, which are precisely the price of the merits of Jesus Christ.

And if the sacrifice of Abraham in offering up to him his son Isaac so pleased God that he promised, as a reward, to multiply his descendants as the stars of heaven: "Because thou hast done this thing, and hast not spared thy only begotten son for my sake, I will bless thee, and I

* Dici potest Virgo mundi salvatrix propter meritum suæ compassionis, quæ patienti filio acerbissime condolendo excellenter promeruit, ut per preces ejus meritum passionis Christi hominibus communicetur. L. 2, de Laud. Virg. art. 23.

† Redempturus humanum genus, universum pretium contulit in Mariam. Serm. de Aquæd.

will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven;"* we must certainly believe that the more remarkable sacrifice which this great mother made of Jesus was much more agreeable to the Lord; and, therefore, it has been granted her, that by her prayers, the number of the elect should be multiplied, that is, the favored succession of her children, for she holds and protects as such her devoted servants.

St. Simeon received a promise from God that he should not die until he had seen the Messiah born: "And he had received an answer from the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death before he had seen the Christ of the Lord."† But he did not receive this grace except by means of Mary, for he did not see the Saviour until he saw him in the arms of Mary. Hence, whoever wishes to find Jesus, will not find him except through Mary. Let us, then, go to this divine mother if we wish to find Jesus; and let us go with great confidence. Mary said to her servant Prudentiana Zagnoni,‡ that every year, on this day of the purification, a great mercy would be shown to some sinner. Who knows but one of us may to-day be that favored sinner? If our sins are great, greater is the power of Mary. The Son can deny nothing to this mother, says

* Quia fecisti hanc rem, et non pepercisti filio tuo unigenito propter me; benedicam tibi, et multiplicabo semen tuum sicut stellas cœli, Genes. xxii. 16, 17.

† Responsum acceperat a Spiritu Sancto non visurum se mortem nisi prius videret Christum Dominum. Luc. ii. 26.

‡ Ap. Marc.

St. Bernard.* If Jesus is offended with us, Mary immediately appeases him. Plutarch relates that Antipater wrote to Alexander the Great a long letter of accusations against Olympias, the mother of Alexander. Having read the letter, he answered: "Does not Antipater know that one tear of my mother is enough to cancel an endless number of letters of accusation?" † Thus we may imagine Jesus would also answer to the accusations which the devil presents him against us when Mary is praying him for us: Does not Lucifer know that one prayer of my mother, in favor of a sinner, is enough to make me forget all the accusations of offences committed against me? The following example is a proof of this.

EXAMPLE.

This example is not recorded in any book, but a priest, a companion of mine, related it to me, as having happened to himself. Whilst this priest was hearing confessions in a certain church (for sufficient reasons he did not mention the place where this occurred, although the penitent gave him leave to publish the fact), a youth stood before him, who appeared to wish and not to wish to come to confession. The Father, after looking at him several times, at length called him, and asked him if he wished to make his

* Exaudiet utique matrem filius. De Aquæd.

† Ignorare Antipatrum sexcentas epistolas una deleri matris lacrymula? Plut. in Alex.

confession. He answered, yes; but as he required a long time for it, the confessor took him into a retired room. There the penitent began by telling him that he was a foreigner, and of noble birth, but he could not believe that it was possible for God to pardon him after the life he had led. Besides innumerable other sins he had committed of impurity, homicide, &c., he said, that being entirely in despair of salvation, he had set about committing sins, not so much for his own gratification, as to defy God, and manifest the hatred he bore him. He said, that among other things, he had with him a crucifix, which he had beaten out of contempt. He said that just before, on that very morning, he had made a sacrilegious communion, and for what object? That he might put under his feet the consecrated wafer. And that, in fact, he had actually received, and was about to put in execution this horrible intention, but was prevented by the people who observed him. He then consigned to the confessor the consecrated host, wrapped in a paper, and told him that as he was passing by that church he had a great desire to enter. He could not resist this desire, and had entered. That then he felt great remorse of conscience, together with a certain confused and irresolute desire to make his confession. For this reason he had placed himself before the confessional, but while standing there he felt so confused and timid, that he wished to go away, but it seemed as if some one had retained him by force: "Un-

til," he said, "you, Father, called me; and now I find myself here; I find myself making my confession; but I know not how to do it." The Father then asked him if he had practised any act of devotion during that time; meaning towards the most holy Mary; for such sudden conversions only come through the powerful hands of the Virgin. "None, Father; what devotion could I offer," answered the youth, when I believed myself lost?" "But try to remember more carefully," replied the Father. "Father, nothing." But accidentally putting his hand to his breast, he remembered that he wore the Scapular of the Seven Dolors of Mary: "Maria addolorata." "Ah, my son," said the confessor to him, "do you not see that our blessed Lady has bestowed this grace upon you? And know," he added, "that this church is a church of our blessed Lady." Hearing this, the youth was moved to contrition, and began to weep. He confessed his sins, and his compunction increased to such a degree that, bursting into tears, he fell, overcome with grief, as it seemed, at the feet of the Father, who, having restored him by a cordial, finally finished hearing his confession, and absolved him with the greatest consolation, as he was entirely contrite and resolved to amend his life. The Father sent him back to his own country after having obtained from him full liberty to preach and publish everywhere the great mercy exercised by Mary towards him.

PRAYER.

Oh holy mother of God my mother Mary, didst thou then feel so great care of my salvation that thou didst even consent to offer up to death the object dearest to thy heart, thy beloved Jesus? If thou, then, hast so greatly desired to see me saved, it is just that next to God I should place in thee all my hopes. Oh, blessed Virgin, I do indeed confide entirely in thee. Oh, by the merit of this great sacrifice of the life of thy Son which to-day thou hast offered to God, pray him to have pity on my soul, for which this immaculate Lamb did not refuse to die upon the cross.

To-day, oh my queen, I also, in imitation of thee wish to offer my poor heart to God; but I fear that he will refuse it, seeing it thus filthy and loathsome. But if thou wilt offer it to him, he will not refuse it. All the offerings made him by thy most pure hands he accepts and receives. To thee, then, oh Mary, I present myself to-day, miserable as I am, and to thee I give myself entirely. Offer me as thine to the eternal Father and to Jesus, and pray him that through the merits of his Son, and by thy favor, he may accept me, and take me for his own. Ah, my sweetest mother, for the love thou bearest this Son whom thou hast sacrificed, aid me always, and do not abandon me. Do not permit that I should one day lose, through my sins, this my most loving Redeemer, to-day offered

by thee with so much anguish to die on the cross. Say to him that I am thy servant; say to him that in thee I have placed all my hope; say to him, in a word, that thou dost wish for my salvation, and he will certainly graciously hear thee. Amen.

DISCOURSE VII.

ON THE ASSUMPTION OF MARY.

On this day the Church proposes to us to celebrate two solemn observances in honor of Mary: one, her happy departure from this earth; the other, her glorious assumption into heaven. In the present discourse we shall speak of her departure from this earth, and in the next of her assumption.

How precious was the death of Mary! 1st, On account of the special grace which attended it; 2d, On account of the manner of it.

Death being the punishment of sin, it would seem that the divine mother, all holy and exempt from every stain, should not be subject to death, nor suffer the same misfortune as the children of Adam, who are infected by the poison of sin. But God, wishing Mary in all things to be like to Jesus, required, as the Son had died, that the mother should also die; and because he wishes to give to the just an example of the blessed death prepared for them, he decreed that the virgin should die, but by a

sweet and happy death. Hence we will enter upon the consideration, how precious was the death of Mary. 1st. On account of the special grace by which it was accompanied. 2d. On account of the manner in which it took place.

Point First.—Three things render death bitter, namely, attachment to earth, remorse for sin, and the uncertainty of salvation. But the death of Mary was entirely free from any such causes of bitterness, and was attended by many circumstances which rendered it precious and joyful. She died as she had always lived, entirely detached from all earthly things; she died in the most perfect peace of conscience; she died in the certainty of eternal glory.

And in the first place, there is no doubt that attachment to the goods of earth renders the death of the worldly bitter and miserable, as the Holy Spirit says: "Oh! death, how bitter is the remembrance of thee to a man that hath peace in his possessions!"* But because the saints die detached from the things of the world, their death is not bitter, but sweet, lovely, and precious; or, as St. Bernard explains, it is worthy being purchased at any price. Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord: "Beati mortui qui in Domino moriuntur."† Who are they that being dead, die? Precisely those happy souls that pass into eternity, already detached, and, as it

* O mors, quam amara est memoria tua homini pacem habenti in substantiis suis! Eccli. xli. 1.

† Apoc. xiv. 13.

were, dead to all affections for terrestrial things, having found in God alone there every good; as St. Francis of Assisium, who exclaimed: My God, and my all: "Deus meus et omnia." But what soul was ever more detached from the things of the world, and more united to God, than the beautiful soul of Mary? She was indeed entirely detached from her parents, since at the age of three years, when children are most dependent on their parents, and have the greatest need of their assistance, Mary with so great resolution left them, and went to shut herself up in the temple to attend to the things of God. She was detached from riches, contented to live always poor, and supporting herself with the labor of her hands. She was detached from honors, loving an humble and abject life, although queenly honor belonged to her, for she traced her descent from the kings of Israel. The Virgin herself revealed to St. Elizabeth, a Benedictine nun, that when she was left in the temple by her parents, she resolved in her heart to have no other father, and to love no other good but God.

St. John saw Mary represented in that woman clothed with the sun, who held the moon under her feet. "And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet."* Interpreters explain the moon to signify the goods of this earth, that are uncertain, and change as the

* Signum magnum apparuit in cœlo; mulier amicta sole et luna sub pedibus ejus. Apoc. xii. 1.

moon does. All these goods Mary never had in her heart, but always despised them and kept them under her feet; living in this world as a solitary turtle-dove in a desert; placing her affection on no earthly thing, so that it was said of her: The voice of the turtle is heard in our land: "Vox turturis audita est in terra nostra." * And again, "Who is she that goeth up by the desert?" † whence Rupert says: "Thou hast gone up by the desert, that is, having a solitary soul." ‡ Mary, then, having always lived entirely detached from the things of earth, and only united to God, not bitter, but very sweet and dear to her was death, which united her more closely to God, by the eternal bonds of paradise.

Secondly, peace of conscience renders the death of the just precious. The sins committed in life are those worms that the most torment and gnaw the heart of poor dying sinners, who, about to be presented at the divine tribunal, see themselves at that moment surrounded by their sins, which terrify them, and pursue them with cries, as St Bernard says: "We are thy works, we will not desert thee." § Certainly Mary could not be afflicted in death by any remorse of conscience, for she was always holy, always pure, and always free from every shade of actual and original sin; hence it was said of her:

* Vox turturis audita est in terra nostra. Cant. ii. 12.
† Quæ est ista quæ ascendit per desertum, etc. Cant. iii. 6.
‡ Talis ascendisti per desertum, idest animam habens solitariam.
§ Opera tua sumus, non te deseremus.

Thou art all fair, oh my love, and there is not a spot in thee: "Tota pulchra es, amica mea, et macula non est in te."* As soon as she had the use of reason, that is, from the first moment of her immaculate conception in the womb of St. Ann, from that time she began with all her powers to love her God; and thus she continued to do, ever advancing more in perfection and love through her whole life. All her thoughts, her desires, her affections, were wholly given to God; not a word, not a motion, not a glance of the eye, not a breath of hers that was not for God and for his glory, never departing one step, nor separating herself for one moment from the divine love. Ah! in the happy hour of her death how did all the lovely virtues which she practised during her life surround her blessed bed! That faith so constant, that affectionate confidence in God, that patience so strong in the midst of sufferings, that humility in the midst of so many privileges, that modesty, that meekness, that compassion for souls, that zeal for the divine glory, and above all, that perfect charity towards God, with that entire uniformity to the divine will—all, in a word, thronged around her, and consoling her, said: We are thy works, we will not desert thee: "Opera tua sumus, non te deseremus." Oh Lady and mother, we are all children of thy loving heart; now that thou art leaving this miserable life, we will not leave thee, we also will go to attend thee and honor

* Cant. iv. 7.

thee in paradise, where, by our means, thou wilt be crowned queen of all men and of all the angels.

In the third place, the certainty of eternal salvation renders death sweet. Death is called a passage, since, through death we pass from this short life to life eternal. And, as the dread is great of those who die in doubt of their salvation, and who approach the solemn moment with just fear of passing into an eternal death, thus, on the other hand, very great is the joy of the saints at the end of life, hoping with some security to go and possess God in heaven. A nun of the order of St. Theresa, when the physician announced to her that death was near, was so full of joy that she said to him: "And how does it happen, sir, that you tell me this good news and ask no fee for it?" St. Lawrence Justinian being at the point of death, and seeing his friends weeping around him, said to them : "Away, away with your tears, this is no time for tears."* Go elsewhere to weep; if you will remain with me you must rejoice, as I rejoice, in seeing the gate of paradise open to unite me with my God. And thus, also, a St. Peter of Alcantara, a St. Louis of Gonzaga, and so many other saints, on hearing that death was at hand, burst forth into exclamations of joy and gladness. And yet they were not certain of the divine favor, nor secure of their own sanctity, as Mary was secure of hers. But what joy must the divine mother have felt

* Abite, abite cum lacrymis vestris; non est tempus lacrymarum.

in learning that her death was at hand; she, who had the fullest security of enjoying the divine favor, especially after the angel Gabriel had assured her that she was full of grace, and already possessed God! "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee . . . . thou hast found grace."* And well did she herself know that her heart was burning continually with divine love, for that as Bernardine de Bustis says, Mary, by a singular grace not granted to any other saint, loved, and was always actually occupied in loving God every moment of her life, and so ardently, that, as St. Bernard says, it required a perpetual miracle to preserve her life in the midst of such burning flames.

It was before said to Mary in the sacred canticles: "Who is she that goeth up by the desert as a pillar of smoke of aromatical spices, of myrrh, and frankincense, and of all the powders of the perfumer?"† Her entire mortification was prefigured in the myrrh, her fervent prayers were signified by the incense, and all her holy virtues united to her perfect charity towards God, kindled in her a flame so great, that her holy soul, wholly devoted to, and consumed by divine love, arose continually to God as a pillar of smoke that on all sides breathed sweet odor. As a pillar of smoke, oh blessed Lady,

* Ave gratia plena; Dominus tecum . . . invenisti gratiam. Luc. xxviii. 30.

† Quæ est ista quæ ascendit per desertum, sicut virgula fumi, ex aromatibus myrrhæ, et thuris, et universi pulveris pigmentarii? Cant. iii. 6.

wrote Rupert, thou hast breathed forth a sweet odor to the Most High.* And Eustachius still more strongly expresses it: A pillar of smoke, because burning interiorly as a holocaust with the flame of divine love, she sent forth a most sweet odor.† As the loving Virgin lived, such she died. As the divine love gave her life, so it gave her death; for she died as the holy Doctors and Fathers of the Church generally affirm, of no other infirmity than pure love; for St. Ildephonsus says, that Mary either ought not to die, or only die of love.

Second Point.—But let us now see what were the circumstances of her happy death. After the ascension of Jesus Christ, Mary remained on earth to attend to the propagation of the faith. Hence the disciples of Jesus had recourse to her, and she resolved their doubts, comforted them in their persecutions, and encouraged them to labor for the divine glory and for the salvation of the souls redeemed by her Son. She, indeed, willingly remained on earth, understanding this to be the will of God for the good of the Church; but she could not but feel the pain of being far from the presence and sight of her beloved Son, who had ascended into heaven. "Where your treasure is," said the Redeemer, "there will your heart be also."‡ Where any one believes his

* Talis fumi virgula, beata Maria, suavem odorem spirasti altissimo.

† Virgula fumi, quia concremata intus in holocaustum incendio divini amoris, ex ea flagrabat suavissimus odor.

‡ Ubi thesaurus vester est ibi et cor vestrum erit. Luc. xii. 34.

treasure and his happiness to lie, there he always holds the love and desire of his heart fixed. If Mary then loved no other good than Jesus, he being in heaven, in heaven were all her desires. Taulerus wrote of Mary: The cellof Mary was heaven, "Mariæ cella fuit cœlum,"* for being in heaven, with her affection, she made it her continual abode. Her school was eternity: "Schola æternitas," for she was always detached from temporal possessions. Her teacher, divine truth: "Pædagogus divina veritas," for she was always guided in her actions by the divine light. Her mirror, the Divinity; "Speculum divinitas," for she looked upon nothing but God, in order to conform always to the divine will. Her ornament, devotion: "Ornatus ejus devotio," for she was always ready to fulfil the divine commands. Her repose, union with God: "Quies unitas cum Deo," for her peace was only in uniting herself with God. In a word, the place and treasure of her heart was God alone: "Cordis illius locus et thesaurus solus Deus erat." The most holy Virgin consoled her loving heart during this cruel separation, by visiting, as it is narrated, the holy places of Palestine, where her Son had been in his lifetime: she often visited now the stable of Bethlehem, where her Son was born; now the workshop at Nazareth, where her Son had lived so many years poor and despised; now the garden of Gethsemane, where her Son commenced his passion: now the hall of Pilate, where he was

* Serm. de Nat. V. Mar.

scourged; the place where he was crowned; but more often she visited Calvary, where her Son had expired; and the holy sepulchre, where she finally had left him. And thus the most loving mother used to soothe the pains of her cruel exile. But this was not enough to satisfy her heart, which could not find its perfect rest upon this earth; hence her continual sighs were ascending to her Lord, as she exclaimed with David, but with more ardent love: "Who will give me wings like a dove, and I will fly and be at rest."* Who will give me wings like a dove to fly to my God and there to find my rest? "As the hart panteth after the fountains of water, so my soul panteth after thee, oh God."† As the wounded stag pants for the fountain, so my soul, wounded by thy love, oh my God, desires and sighs for thee. Ah, the sighs of this holy turtle-dove could not but reach the heart of her God,who loved her so much: "The voice of the turtle is heard in our land." Wherefore not being willing to defer any longer consolation to his beloved, behold, he graciously hears her desire and calls her to his kingdom.

Cedrenus,‡ Nicephorus,§ and Metaphrastes,‖ relate, that the Lord, some days before his death, sent to her the angel Gabriel, the same who once announced to her that she was the blessed woman

* Quis dabit mihi pennas sicut columbæ, et volabo et requiescam? Psal. liv. 7.

† Quemadmodum desiderat cervus ad fontes aquarum, ita desiderat anima mea ad te, Deus. Psal. xli. 2.

‡ Comp. Hist. § L. 2, c. 21. ‖ Orat. de Dorm. Mar.

chosen to be the mother of God: My Lady and Queen, said the angel to her, God has already graciously heard thy holy desires, and he has sent me to tell thee to prepare to leave the earth, for he wishes thee with him in paradise. Come then, to take possession of thy kingdom, for I and all its holy citizens await and desire thee. At this happy annunciation what should our most humble and holy Virgin do but conceal herself more deeply in the centre of her most profound humility, and reply in those same words with which she answered St. Gabriel when he announced to her that she was to become mother of God: Behold the handmaid of the Lord: "Ecce ancilla Domini?" Behold, she again answered, the servant of the Lord; he in his pure goodness has chosen me and made me his mother; now he calls me to paradise. I neither merited the one or the other honor; but since he wishes to manifest his infinite liberality towards me, I am ready to go where he wishes. "Behold the handmaid of the Lord;" may the will of my God and Lord always be fulfilled in me.

After receiving this precious intelligence, she imparted it to St. John, and we may imagine with what grief and tender emotion he heard this news; he who for so many years had been near her as a son, and had enjoyed the celestial conversation of this most holy mother. She then visited anew the holy places of Jerusalem, tenderly taking leave of them, especially of Calvary, where her beloved Son had died. And

then she returned to her poor dwelling to prepare for death. During this time the angels did not cease to come and visit this their beloved queen, consoling themselves with the thought that they should soon see her crowned in heaven. Many authors assert,* that before she died, by a divine miracle, the apostles and also some of the disciples came from the different places where they were dispersed, and all assembled in the apartment of Mary, and that when she saw all these her dear children united together in her presence, she thus addressed them: My dear children, for love of you, and to help you, my Son left me on this earth. But now the holy faith is spread throughout the world, already the fruit of the divine seed is grown up; hence my divine Son, seeing that my assistance was no longer needed upon the earth, and compassionating me for the pain of separation, has graciously heard my desire to depart from this life, and go to see him in glory. If I leave you, my heart does not leave you; I will carry with me the great love I bear you, and it shall always remain with me. I am going to paradise to pray for you. At these sad tidings, who can realize how great were the tears and lamentations of these holy disciples, knowing that they were shortly to be separated from their mother? Then, they all in tears exclaimed, then, oh Mary, thou wilt leave us! It is true that this earth is not a worthy and fit place for thee, and that we

* S. Andr. Cret. Or. de Dorm. Deip., Damasc. de Dorm. Deip Euthim, l. 3, Hist. c. 40.

are not worthy to enjoy the society of a mother of God; but remember that thou art our mother; thou hast until now enlightened us in our doubts, consoled our sorrows, strengthened us in persecutions, and how canst thou now abandon us, leaving us alone without thy comfort in the midst of so many enemies and so many conflicts? We have already lost on earth Jesus, our master and our Father, who has ascended into heaven; we have since been consoled by thee, our mother; and now how canst thou leave us orphans, without father or mother? Oh remain with us, oh our Lady! or take us with thee. Thus writes St. John Damascene.* "No, my children (thus sweetly the loving queen began to speak) this is not according to the will of God; content yourselves to do what he has appointed for you and for me. To you it yet remains to labor on the earth for the glory of your Redeemer, and to perfect your eternal crown. I do not leave you to abandon you, but to help you more by my intercession with God in heaven. Be satisfied. I commend to you the holy Church; I commend to you the souls redeemed by my Son; let this be my last farewell, and the only remembrance that I leave you. If you love me, labor for souls, and for the glory of my Son; for we shall one day meet again in paradise, never more to separate throughout eternity."

Then she begged them to give burial to her body after death, blessed them, and directed St.

* Orat. de Ass. Virg.

John, as Damascene relates,* that after her death he should give her two garments to two virgins who had served her for some time, and then she decently composed herself upon her poor little bed, where she laid herself to await death, and with death the meeting with her divine spouse, who shortly was to come and take her with him to the kingdom of the blessed. Behold, she already feels in her heart a great joy, the forerunner of the coming of the spouse, which overwhelms her with a great and new sweetness. The holy apostles, seeing that Mary already was about to depart from this earth, burst forth into fresh weeping, and knelt around her bed: some kissed her holy feet, others asked her special blessing, one recommended to her some particular necessity of his, and all wept bitterly, for their hearts were pierced with grief at being obliged to separate forever in this life from their beloved Lady. And she, their most loving mother, compassionated all, consoled all, promising to some her protection, blessing others with peculiar affection, and encouraging others to labor for the conversion of the world; especially did she call St. Peter to her, and as head of the Church, and vicar of her Son, she recommended to him in particular the propagation of the faith, promising him her special protection from heaven. But in a very special manner did she call to her St. John, who felt

* Nicephorus and Metaphrastes, appr. l'Ist. di Mar. del P. F. Gius. e M. l. 5, 13.

a greater sorrow than all the others at the moment of separation from that holy mother; and the most grateful Lady, calling to mind the affection and attention with which this holy disciple had served her through all the years they had passed on earth since the death of her Son, said to him with great tenderness: My John, I thank thee for all the assistance thou hast afforded me; my son, be certain that I never will be ungrateful to thee for it. If I leave thee now, I am going to pray for thee. Remain in peace in this life until we meet in heaven, where I will await thee. Do not forget me; in all thy necessities call me to thy aid, for I never will forget thee, my beloved son. My son, I bless thee, I leave thee my benediction; rest in peace—adieu.

But the death of Mary draws near. The divine love, with its blessed and ardent flames, have almost entirely consumed the vital spirits, the celestial phœnix is going to lose her life in the midst of this fire. Then the host of angels come to meet her, as if to be ready for the great triumph with which they were to accompany her to paradise.

Mary was indeed consoled at the sight of these holy spirits; but not fully consoled, for she did not yet see her beloved Jesus, who was the whole love of her heart. Hence she often repeated to the angels who descended to salute her: "I adjure you, oh daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, that you tell him that I

languish with love."* Oh holy angels! oh blessed citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem! ye come in hosts kindly to console me, and ye all console me with your sweet presence; I thank you, but ye all do not fully satisfy me, for I do not yet see my Son coming to console me Go, if you love me, return to paradise, and tell my beloved, from me, that I languish and faint for his love. Tell him to come, and come quickly, for I am dying with my desire to see him.

But behold, Jesus himself comes to take his mother to the kingdom of the blessed. It was revealed to St. Elizabeth, that the Son appeared to Mary before she expired, with the cross in his hand, to show the special glory he had obtained from the redemption, having by his death made the acquisition of this great creature, who through the ages of eternity was to honor him more than all men and all angels. St. John of Damascus relates, that he gave to her the holy viaticum, saying to her, tenderly: Take, oh my mother, from my hands, that same body which thou hast given me. And the mother having received with the greatest love that final communion, with her last sighs said to him: My Son, into thy hands I commend my spirit; I recommend to thee this soul that thou, in thy goodness didst create even from the beginning, rich in so many graces, and by a peculiar privilege hast preserved from every stain of sin. I commend to thee my body, from which thou

* Adjuro vos, filiæ Jerusalem, si inveneritis dilectum meum, ut nuntietis ei, quia amore langueo. Cant. v. 8.

hast deigned to take flesh and blood. I commend to thee, also, these my dear children (speaking of the holy disciples who were around her), they are afflicted at my departure; do thou console them, who lovest them more than I do, bless them, and give them strength to do great things for thy glory.*

The end of the life of Mary having now arrived, there was heard, as St. Jerome relates, in the apartment where she lay, a great harmony; and also, as it was revealed to St. Bridget, a great brightness was seen. By this harmony and unusual splendor the holy Apostles perceived that Mary was then departing, at which they broke forth again in tears and prayers, and raising their hands, with one voice exclaimed: Oh, our mother, now thou art going to heaven, and art leaving us, give us thy last benediction, and do not forget us in our misery. And Mary, turning her eyes around upon them all, as if bidding them for the last time farewell, said: Adieu, my children: I bless you; do not fear that I shall forget you. And now death came, not indeed clothed in mourning and sadness, as it comes to others, but adorned with light and joy. But why death, why death? Rather should we say that divine love came to cut the thread of that noble life. And as a lamp before going out, her life, amid these last flickerings, flashed forth more brightly, and then expired. Thus, this beautiful soul, her Son inviting her to follow him, wrapped in the flame of her charity,

* App. S. gio. Dam. or. de Ass. V.

and in the midst of her amorous sighs, breathed forth a greater sigh of love, expired and died; and thus that great soul, that beautiful dove of our Lord, was released from the bonds of this life, and entered into the glory of the blessed, where she sits, and will sit, as queen of paradise, for all eternity.

Now Mary has left the earth, now she is in heaven. From thence this kind mother looks down upon us, who are still in this valley of tears, compassionates us, and promises us her support if we wish for it. Let us pray her always that by the merits of her blessed death she may obtain for us a happy death; and if it please God, that she may obtain for us to die on a Saturday, which is dedicated to her honor, or on a day of the Novena, or of the octave of some of her feasts, as she has obtained for so many of her servants, and especially for St. Stanislas Kostka, for whom she obtained to die on the day of her glorious Assumption, as Father Bartoli relates in his life of the saint.*

EXAMPLE.

During the lifetime of this holy youth, who was wholly devoted to the love of Mary, it happened that on the first day of August, he heard a sermon of Father Peter Canisius, in which, preaching to the novices of his society, he fervently urged upon all, the important advice, to live every day as if it might be the last of their life, after which they were to be pre-

* Lib. 1, cap. 1, 2.

sented at the divine tribunal. The sermon being finished, St. Stanislas told his companions that this counsel had been for him especially the voice of God, for that he was to die on that very month. He said this either because God had expressly revealed it to him, or at least because he gave him a certain internal presentiment of what afterwards happened. Four days after, the blessed youth went with Father Emmanuel to St. Mary Major, and beginning to speak of the approaching festival of the Assumption, he said: "Father, I believe that on that day there is seen in paradise a new paradise, the glory being seen there of the mother of God crowned queen of heaven, and seated so near the Lord above all the choirs of angels. And if it is true that every year, as I believe it to be certain, this festival is renewed in heaven, I hope to see the next one." The glorious martyr St. Lawrence having fallen to the saint by lot as his monthly patron, according to the custom of that society, it is said that he wrote a letter to his mother Mary, in which he prayed her to obtain for him that he might be a spectator of this festival of hers in paradise. On St. Lawrence's day he received communion, and after it supplicated the saint to present that letter to the divine mother, by interposing his intercession that the most holy Mary might graciously hear his prayer. At the close of this very day a fever came upon him, and although it was very light, he, however, from that hour esteemed it for certain

that he had obtained the favor asked for him, namely, an early death. Indeed, on going to bed he said joyfully, with a smiling countenance: "From this bed I shall never arise." And speaking to Father Cladius Aquaviva, he added: "I believe that St. Lawrence has already obtained for me the grace from Mary that I should be in heaven on the festival of her Assumption." But no one thought much of these his words. The vigil having arrived, his malady continued to appear light, but the saint told a brother that he should die the next night, and the brother answered: "Oh, brother, it would be a greater miracle to die of so slight an illness, than to be cured." But, behold, after noon he fell into a deadly swoon, and then came a cold sweat, and he entirely lost his strength. The superior hastened to him, and Stanislas prayed him to order him to be placed on the bare floor, that he might die as a penitent, which was granted in order to satisfy him, and he was laid on the floor on a mattress. Then he made his confession, received the viaticum, not without the tears of all present, for when the divine sacrament was brought into the apartment, his eyes kindled with celestial joy, and his whole countenance was radiant with holy love, so that he seemed a seraph. He also received extreme unction, and meanwhile did nothing but now raise his eyes to heaven, now look upon, kiss, and lovingly press to his breast, an image of Mary. A father said to him: "Of what use is it to wear that rosary

around your hand, if you cannot recite it?" He answered: "It serves to console me, for it is something belonging to my mother." "Oh, how much more," said the Father, "will you be consoled by seeing her, and kissing, in a short time, her hands in heaven!" Then the saint, with his countenance all on fire, raised his hands, thus to express his desire of finding himself soon in her presence. Then his dear mother appeared to him, as he himself declared to those around him, and soon after, at the dawn of day on the fifteenth of August, he expired as a saint, his eyes fixed on heaven, without a motion, so that not until afterwards, when the image of the most holy Virgin was presented, and he made no movement towards it, it was perceived that he had already gone to kiss in paradise the feet of his beloved queen.

PRAYER.

Oh, our most sweet Lady and Mother, thou hast already left the earth, and hast reached the kingdom, where thou sittest as queen over all the choirs of angels, as the holy Church sings: She was exalted about the choirs of angels in the celestial kingdoms: "Exaltata est super choros angelorum ad cœlestia regna." We know that we sinners are not worthy of having thee with us in the valley of darkness. But we know also, that thou in thy grandeur hast never forgotten us in our misery, and by being exalted to such glory hast never lost compassion

for us poor children of Adam, but rather that it is increased in thee. From the high throne then, where thou dost reign, turn, oh Mary, even upon us, thy pitying eyes, and take compassion upon us. Remember, too, that on leaving this world, thou didst promise not to forget us. Look upon us and succor us. See in what tempests and in how many dangers we are, and always shall be, till the end of our life arrives. By the merits of thy holy death, obtain for us holy perseverance in the divine friendship, that we may finally depart from this life in the grace of God, and thus come one day to kiss thy feet in paradise, and unite ourselves with the blessed spirits in praising thee, and singing thy glories, as thou dost merit. Amen.

DISCOURSE VIII.

ANOTHER DISCOURSE ON THE ASSUMPTION OF MARY.

1st. How glorious was the triumph of Mary when she ascended to heaven! 2d. How exalted was the throne to which she was raised in heaven!

It would seem just that the holy Church, on this day of the Assumption of Mary to heaven, should rather invite us to weep than to rejoice, since our sweet mother has quitted this earth, and left us bereft of her sweet presence, as St. Bernard says: It seems that we should rather weep than exult: "Plangendum nobis, quam

plaudendum magis esse videtur."* But no, the holy Church invites us to rejoice: "Let us all rejoice in the Lord, celebrating a festival in honor of the blessed Virgin Mary."† And justly, if we love this our mother, we ought to congratulate ourselves more upon her glory than upon our own particular consolation. What son does not rejoice, although separated from his mother, if he knows that she is going to take possession of a kingdom? Mary, to-day, is to be crowned queen of heaven, and shall we not make a feast and rejoice if we truly love her? Let us all rejoice, let us rejoice: "Gaudeamus omnes, et gaudeamus." And that we may be consoled the more by her exaltation, let us consider, in the first place, how glorious was the triumph of Mary ascending to heaven; secondly, how exalted was the throne to which she was elevated in heaven.

First Point.—After Jesus Christ our Saviour had completed the work of our redemption by his death, the angels earnestly desired to have him with them in their heavenly country; hence they were continually supplicating him, repeating the words of David: "Arise, oh Lord, into thy resting-place, thou and the ark which thou hast sanctified."‡ Come, oh Lord, now that thou hast redeemed men, come to thy kingdom with us, and bring with thee also the liv-

* Serm. 1, de Ass.

† Gaudeamus omnes in Domino diem festum celebrantes sub honore B. Mariæ Virginis.

‡ Surge, Domine, in requiem tuam, tu et arca sanctificationis tuæ. Psal. cxxxi. 8.

ing ark of thy sanctification, namely, thy mother, who was the ark sanctified by thee when thou didst inhabit her womb. Thus St. Bernardine puts it into the mouth of the angels to say: Let thy most holy mother Mary also ascend sanctified by thy conception.* At length, then, our Lord wished to satisfy this desire of those citizens of the heavenly country, by calling Mary to paradise. But, if he wished that the ark of the covenant should be conducted with great pomp into the city of David—And David and all the house of Israel brought the ark of the covenant of the Lord with joyful shouting, and with sound of trumpet†—with far more splendid and glorious pomp he ordained that his mother should enter into heaven. The prophet Elias was carried up to heaven in a chariot of fire, which, according to the interpreters, was but a company of angels who raised him from the earth. But, to conduct thee into heaven, oh mother of God, as Rupert the Abbot says, a company of angels was not enough, but the King of heaven himself, with all his celestial court, came to accompany thee.‡

St. Bernardine of Sienna is of the same opinion, namely: that Jesus Christ, in order to hon-

* Ascendat etiam Maria tua sanctissima mater, tui conceptione sanctificata. Serm. de Ass.

† Et David et omnis domus Israel ducebant arcam testamenti Domini in jubilo, et clangore buccinæ. 2 Reg. vi. 15.

‡ Ad transferendum te in cœlum non unus tantum currus igneus, sed totus cum rege suo filio tuo venit, atque occurrit exercitus angelorum.

or the triumph of Mary, came himself from paradise to meet and accompany her.* And precisely for this object it was, says St. Anselm, that the Redeemer wished to ascend before his mother, not only to prepare for her a throne in that palace, but also to render her entrance into heaven more glorious, accompanying her himself, with all the blessed spirits.† Hence St. Peter Damian, contemplating the splendor of this assumption of Mary into heaven, says that we shall find it more glorious than the ascension of Jesus Christ; for the angels only came to meet the Redeemer, but the blessed Virgin went to glory met and accompanied by the Lord of glory himself, and by all the blessed company of saints and angels.‡ Hence Guerric the Abbot represents the divine Word speaking thus: I descended from heaven upon earth to give glory to my Father; but afterwards, to pay honor to my mother, I ascended again into heaven, that I might thus be enabled to come to meet her, and accompany her by my presence to paradise.§

Let us now consider how the Saviour really did come from heaven to meet his mother, and

* Surrexit gloriosus Jesus in occursum suæ dulcissimæ matris.

† Prudentiore consilio illam præcedere volebas, quatenus in regno tuo ei locum præpararet, et sic comitatus tota curia tua festivus ei occurrens sublimius, sicut decebat, tuam matrem ad te exaltares. Vid. de Exc. Virg. cap. 8.

‡ Invenies occursum ejus pompæ digniorem, quam in Christi ascensione; soli quippe angeli redemptori occurrere potuerunt, matri vero filius ipse cum tota curia tam angelorum quam sanctorum occurrens, auxit ad beatæ consistorium sessionis. Serm. de Ass.

§ Ego ut patrem honorarem, ad terram descendi; ut matrem honorarem, ad cœlum reascendi.

at the first interview said, to console her: "Arise, make haste, my love, my dove, my beautiful one, and come; for winter is now past... and gone."* Come, my dear mother, my beautiful and pure dove, leave that valley of tears where thou hast suffered so much for my love; come from Libanus, my spouse, come from Libanus, come, thou shalt be crowned.† Come with soul and body, to enjoy the reward of thy holy life. If thou hast suffered much upon earth, far greater is the glory that I have prepared for thee in heaven. Come there to sit near me; come to receive the crown that I will give thee as queen of the universe. Now, behold, Mary leaves the earth, and calling to mind the many graces she had there received from her Lord, she looks at it at the same time both with affection and compassion, leaving in it so many poor children, in the midst of so many miseries and dangers. And now Jesus offers her his hand, and the blessed mother rises in the air and passes beyond the clouds and spheres. Behold her now arrived at the gates of heaven. When monarchs made their entrance to take possession of their kingdom, they do not pass through the gates of the city, for either these are taken off entirely, or they pass over them. Hence the angels, when Jesus Christ entered paradise, cried: "Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates;

* Surge, propera, amica mea, columba mea, et veni. Jam hyems transiit, imber abiit et recessit. Cant. ii. 10, 11.

† Veni de Libano, sponsa mea. veni de Libano; veni coronaberis. Cant. iv. 8.

and the King of glory shall enter in."* Thus, also, now that Mary is going to take possession of the kingdom of the heavens, the angels who accompany her cry to the others who are within: "Lift up your gates, ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates, and the queen of glory shall enter in."†

And now Mary enters into the blessed country. But on her entrance, the celestial spirits seeing her so beautiful and glorious, ask of those who are without, as Origen describes it, and exclaim, all rejoicing in heaven in one (voice): "Who is this that cometh up from the desert, flowing with delights, leaning upon her beloved?"‡ And who is this creature so beautiful, that comes from the desert of the earth, a place so full of thorns and tribulation? But this one comes so pure and so rich in virtue, supported by her beloved Lord, who deigns to accompany her with so great honor. Who is she? The angels who accompany her answer: This is the mother of our King, she is our queen, and the blessed one among women, full of grace, the saint of saints, the beloved of God, the immaculate, the dove, the most beautiful of all creatures. And then all those blessed spirits begin to bless and praise her, singing, with more reason than the Hebrews

* Attollite portas principes vestras, et elevamini portæ eternales, et introibit rex gloriæ. Psal. xxiii. 7.

† Attollite portas, principes, vestras, et elevamini portæ eternales, et introibit regina gloriæ.

‡ Una omnium in cœlo erat lætantium (vox): Quæ est ista quæ ascendit de deserto deliciis affluens, innixa super dilectum suum? Cant. viii. 5.

said to Judith: "Thou art the glory of Jerusalem, thou art the joy of Israel, thou art the honor of our people."* Ah! our Lady and our queen, then thou art the glory of paradise, the joy of our country, thou art the honor of us all; be ever welcome, be ever blessed; behold thy kingdom, behold us, we are all thy servants, ready for thy commands.

Then all the saints who were at that time in paradise came to welcome her and salute her as their queen. All the holy virgins came: They saw her, and declared her most blessed . . . . . and they praised her.† We, they said, oh most blessed Lady, are also queens of this kingdom, but thou art our queen; for thou wast the first to give us the great example of consecrating our virginity to God; we all bless and thank thee for it. Then came the holy confessors to salute her as their mistress, who had taught them so many beautiful virtues by her holy life. The holy martyrs came also to salute her as their queen, because by her great constancy in the sorrows of the passion of her Son, she had taught them, and also obtained for them by her merits, strength to give their life for the faith. St. James came also, the only one of the apostles who was then in paradise, to thank her in the name of all the other apostles, for the great comfort and support she had given them

* Tu gloria Jerusalem, tu lætitia Israel, tu honorificentia populi nostri. Jud. xv. 10.

† Viderunt eam filiæ, et beatissimam prædicaverunt, ... et laudaverunt eam. Cant. vi. 8.

while she was upon earth. The prophets next came to salute her, and they said to her: Ah, Lady, thou wast foreshadowed in our prophecies. The holy patriarchs came and said to her: Oh Mary, thou hast been our hope, so much and so long sighed for by us. And among those came our first parents, Adam and Eve, to thank her with greater affection. Ah, beloved daughter, they said to her, thou hast repaired the injury done by us to the human race; thou hast obtained for the world that blessing lost by us, on account of our crime: by thee we are saved, and for it be forever blessed.

Then came holy Simeon to kiss her feet, and with joy reminded her of that day on which he received from her hands the infant Jesus. St. Zachary and St. Elizabeth also came, and thanked her again for that loving visit, that with so much humility and charity she made them in their dwelling, and through which they received so many treasures of grace. St. John the Baptist came with greater affection to thank her for having sanctified him by means of her voice. But what could her parents, St. Joachim and St. Anna, say to her, when they came to salute her? Oh God! with what tenderness must they have blessed her, saying: Ah! beloved daughter, what happiness was ours in having such a child! Ah! be thou our queen now, because thou art the mother of our God; as such we salute thee and adore thee. But who can comprehend the affection with which her dear spouse St. Joseph

came to salute her? Who can describe the joy that the holy patriarch experienced at seeing his spouse arrive in heaven with so much triumph, made queen of all paradise? With what tenderness did he say to her: Ah! my Lady and spouse, how shall I ever be able to thank our God as I ought for having made me thy spouse, thou who art his true mother? Through thee I merited on earth to attend upon the childhood of the incarnate Word, to bear him so often in my arms, and receive from him so many special favors. Blessed be the moments that I spent in life serving Jesus and thee, my holy spouse. Behold our Jesus; let us console ourselves that now he is no more lying in a stable upon hay, as we saw him at his birth in Bethlehem; he does not now live poor and despised in a shop, as once he lived with us in Nazareth; he is not now nailed to a shameful cross, as when he died for the salvation of the world in Jerusalem; but he sits at the right hand of the Father, as king and Lord of heaven and of earth. And now, oh my queen, we shall never more depart from his holy feet, where we shall bless and love him eternally.

Then all the angels came to salute her, and she, the great queen, thanked all for the assistance they had given her on earth, especially thanking the Archangel St. Gabriel, who was the happy ambassador of all her glories, when he came to announce to her that she was to be made mother of God. Then the humble and holy Vir-

gin, kneeling, adores the divine majesty, and wholly lost in the consciousness of her nothingness, thanks him for all the graces bestowed upon her solely by his goodness, and especially for having made her mother of the eternal Word. Let those who can, comprehend with what love the most holy Trinity blessed her. Let them comprehend what a welcome the eternal Father gave to his daughter, the Son to his mother, the Holy Spirit to his spouse. The Father crowns her by sharing with her his power, the Son his wisdom, the Holy spirit his love. And all the three divine persons establishing her throne at the right hand of Jesus, declare her universal queen of heaven and of earth, and command angels and all other creatures to recognize her for their queen, and as queen to serve and obey her. And here we pass on to the consideration of how exalted was this throne to which Mary was elevated in heaven.

Second Point.—If the human mind, says St. Bernard, cannot attain to comprehend the immense glory which God has prepared in heaven for those who have loved him on earth, as the apostle declares, who will ever attain to comprehend what he has prepared for her who bore him? "Quid præparavit gignenti se"? What glory did he prepare for his beloved mother, he who on earth loved her more than all men; who, even from the first moment of her creation, loved her more than all men and angels united! Justly, then, does the holy Church sing that

Mary having loved God more than all the angels, she has been exalted above all the angels, in heaven.* Yes, she was exalted, says William the Abbot, above the angels, so that she sees no one above her but her Son, who is the only begotten Son of God.†

Hence the learned Gerson asserts, that all the orders of angels and of saints being divided into three hierarchies, as the angelic Doctor declares,‡ and St. Dionysius also, Mary constitutes in heaven a hierarchy of herself, the most sublime of all, and next to God.§ And as the mistress, St. Antoninus adds, is incomparably above her servants, so is the glory of Mary incomparably greater than that of the angels.‖ And in order to understand this, it is enough to know what David said, that this queen was seated at the right hand of the Son: The queen stood on thy right hand: "Astitit regina a dextris tuis."¶ Which St. Athanasius exactly explained by saying: Mary is placed at the right hand of God.**

The works of Mary, as St. Ildephonsus says, certainly incomparably surpassed in merit the works of all the saints, and therefore the reward and the glory she merited cannot be conceived.††

* Exaltata est sancta Dei genitrix super choros angelorum ad cœlestia regna. In Fest. Ass.

† Matrem dico exaltatam super choros angelorum, ut nihil contempletur super se mater, nisi filium suum. Serm. 4, de Ass.

‡ Quæst. 108.

§ Virgo sola constituit hierarchiam secundam sub Deo hierarcha primo. Sup. Magn. tr. 4.

‖ Virgo est domina angelorum; ergo et improportionabiliter est supra omnem hierarchiam angelorum exaltata. 4, part. tit. 15, c. 20.

¶ Psal. xliv. 10.

** Collocatur Maria a dexteris Dei. De Ass. B. V.

†† Sicut est incomparabile quod gessit, ita et incomprehensibile

And if it is certain that God rewards according to merit, as the apostle says, "Who will render to every man according to his works;"* it is also certain, says St. Thomas, that the Virgin who excelled in merit all, both men and angels, must have been exalted above all the celestial orders.† In fine, adds St. Bernard, let us measure the singular grace that she acquired on earth, and then we may measure the singular glory that she has obtained in heaven.‡

The glory of Mary, remarks a learned author,§ which was a full glory, a complete glory, is different from that which the other saints have in heaven. It is true that in heaven all the blessed enjoy a perfect peace and full content; yet it will always be true that no one of them enjoys that glory that he could have merited if he had loved and served God with greater fidelity. Hence, although the saints in heaven desire nothing more than what they possess, yet, in fact, there is something they could yet desire. It is also true that the sins which they have committed, and the time which they have lost, do not bring suffering; but it cannot be denied that the most good done in life, innocence preserved and time well employed, give the greatest content.

præmium, et gloria inter omnes sanctos, quam meruit. Serm. de Ass.

* Reddet unicuique secundum opera ejus. Rom. ii. 6.

† Sicut habuit meritum omnium, et amplius, ita congruum fuit, ut super omnes ponatur ordines cœlestes. L. de Sol. Sanct.

‡ Quantum enim gratiæ in terris adepta est, tantum et in cœlis obtinet gloriæ singularis.

§ Il. P. la Colombiere, Pred. 18, 28.

Mary in heaven desires nothing, and has nothing to desire. Who of the saints in paradise, says St. Augustine, if asked whether he has committed sins, can answer no, except Mary ?* It is certain, as the holy Council of Trent has defined,† that Mary never committed any sin, not even the least; not only she has never lost divine grace —never bedimmed it, but she has never kept it unemployed; she never did an action that was not meritorius; she never said a word, or had a thought, or drew a breath, that was not directed to the greatest glory of God; in a word, she never relaxed or stopped one moment in her onward course to God; she never lost anything through negligence, for she always corresponded with grace with all her power, and loved God as much as she could love him. Oh Lord, she now says to him in heaven, if I have not loved thee as much as thou dost merit, at least I have loved thee as much as I could.

The graces of the saints were different in each, as St. Paul said: There are diversities of graces: "Divisiones gratiarum sunt." So that each of them corresponding with the grace received, has rendered himself excellent in some virtue; one in saving souls, one in leading a life of penance, one in suffering torments, one in contemplation; hence the holy Church, when celebrating their festivals, says of each: And there was not found the like to him: "Non est inventus similis illi." And as in their merits, so are they in heaven

* De Nat et Grat. l. 7, c. 36. † Sess. 6, Can. 13.

different in glory: for star differeth from star in glory: "Stella enim a stella differt."* The Apostles differ from the martyrs, confessors from virgins, the innocents from penitents. The holy Virgin being full of all graces, excelled each saint in every kind of virtue; she was the apostle of the apostles; she was queen of the martyrs, for she suffered more than all of them; she was the standard-bearer of the virgins, the model of spouses; she united in herself a perfect innocence with a perfect mortification; in a word, she united in her heart all the most heroic virtues which any saint has ever practised. Hence it was said of her: "The queen stood on thy right hand in gilded clothing, surrounded with variety;"† for all the graces, privileges, and merits of the other saints were found united in Mary, as the Abbot of Celles says: The prerogatives of all the saints, oh Virgin, thou hast united in thyself.‡

Thus as the splendor of the sun exceeds the splendor of all stars united, so, says St. Basil, the glory of the divine mother exceeds that of all the blessed.§ And St. Peter Damian adds, that as the light of the stars and of the moon disappears as if they were not, at the rising of the

* 1 Cor. xv. 41.

† Astitit regina a dextris tuis in vestitu deaurato circumdata varietate. Psal. xliv. 10.

‡ Sanctorum omnium privilegia, O Virgo, omnia habes in te congesta.

§ Maria universos tantum excedit, quantum sol reliqua astra. Or. de An.

sun, thus Mary so far obscures in glory the splendor of men and angels, that as it were, these do not appear in heaven.* Whence St. Bernardine of Sienna agrees with St. Bernard in asserting that the blessed participate in part in the divine glory, but that the Virgin, in a certain manner, has been so enriched with it, that it seems no creature could be more united with God than is Mary.† Which is confirmed by the blessed Albertus Magnus, when he says that our queen contemplates God very near incomparably more so than all the other celestial spirits.‡ And the above-named St. Bernardine says, moreover, that as the other planets are illuminated by the sun, so all the blessed receive greater light and joy from the sight of Mary.§ And in another place he likewise asserts, that the mother of God, ascending to heaven, increased the joy of all its inhabitants.‖ Hence St. Peter Damian says,that the blessed have no greater glory in heaven, after God, than to enjoy the presence of

* Sol ita sibi siderum et lunæ rapit positionem, ut sint quasi non sint. Similiter et Virga Jesse utrorumque spirituum habebat dignitatem, ut in comparatione v irginis nec possint apparere. Serm. de Ass.

† Divinæ gloriæ participatio cæteris quodammodo per partes datur, sed secundum Bernardum B. Virgo Maria penetravit abyssum, ut quantum creaturæ conditio patitur, illi luci inaccessibili videatur immersa. To. 1, Serm. 61, a. 2, c. 2, 20.

‡ Visio virginis matris super omnes creaturas incomparabiliter contemplatur majestatem Dei. De Laud. Virg. c. 69.

§ Quodammodo sicut cætera luminaria illuminantur a sole, sic tota cœlestis curia a gloriosa virgine lætificatur. Loc. cit. art. 3, c. 3.

‖ Gloriosa virgo cum cœlis ascendit, supernorum gaudia civium cumulavit. Serm. de Ass.

that most beautiful queen: "Summa gloria est post Deum te videre."* And St. Bonaventure: Next to God, our greatest glory and our greatest joy is from Mary.†

Let us rejoice, then, with Mary, in the exalted throne to which God has elevated her in heaven. And let us rejoice also for our own sake, since if our mother has ceased to be present with us, by ascending in glory to heaven, she has not ceased to be present with us in her affection. Nay, being there nearer and more united to God, she better knows our miseries, and therefore pities them more, and is better able to relieve us. And wilt thou, as St. Peter Damian asks, oh blessed Virgin, because thou hast been so exalted in heaven, be forgetful of us miserable creatures?‡ No, may God preserve us from the thought; a heart so merciful cannot but pity our miseries which are so great.§ If the pity of Mary for us was so great when she lived upon earth, much greater, says St. Bonaventure, is it in heaven, where she reigns.‖

Meanwhile let us dedicate ourselves to the service of this queen, to honor and love her as much as we can; for she is not, as Richard of St.

* Serm. 1, de Nat.

† Post Deum major nostra gloria et majus nostrum gaudium ex Maria.

‡ Nunquid, O beata Virgo, quia ita glorificata es, ideo nostræ humilitatis oblita es? Serm. 1, de Nat. V.

§ Absit non convenit tantæ misericordiæ tantæ miseriæ oblivisci.

‖ Magna fuit erga miseros misericordia Mariæ exulantis in mundo, sed multo major est regnantis in cœlo. Spec. c. 8.

Lawrence says, like other rulers, who oppress their vassals with burdens and taxes, but our queen enriches her servants with graces, merits, and rewards.* And let us pray her with Guerric the Abbot: Oh mother of mercy, thou who sittest so near to God, queen of the world, upon a throne so sublime, satiate thyself with the glory of thy Jesus, and send to us thy servants the fragments that are left. Thou dost now enjoy the banquet of the Lord; we who are still on earth, like the dogs under the table, ask thy pity.†

EXAMPLE.

Father Silvanus Razzi relates,‡ that a devout ecclesiastic who had a tender love for our Queen Mary, had heard her beauty so much extolled that he ardently desired once to see his Lady, and with humble prayers asked this favor. The kind mother sent an angel to tell him that she would gratify him by allowing him to see her, but on this condition, namely, that after seeing her he should become blind. He accepted the condition. On a certain day, behold the blessed Virgin appeared to him, and that he might not become wholly blind, he at first wished to look

* Regina Maria non gravat tributis, sed largitur servis suis divitias, dona gratiarum, thesauros meritorum, et magnitudinem præmiorum. De Laud. Virg. l. 6.

† O mater misericordiæ, saturare gloria filii tui, et dimitte reliquias parvulis tuis. Tu jam ad mensam Domini nos sub mensa catelli. Serm. 4, de Ass. Virg.

‡ L. 3, Mirac. B. Virg.

at her with one eye only; but afterwards becoming enamored of the great beauty of Mary, he wished to contemplate her with both, and then the mother of God disappeared. Deeply grieved at having lost the presence of his queen, he could not cease weeping; not indeed for his lost eye, but that he had not seen her with both. Then he began to supplicate her anew, that she would again appear to him, and he would be willing to lose the other eye and become entirely blind. "Happy and satisfied," oh my Lady, he said, "I will remain, if I become wholly blind for so good a cause, which will leave me more enamored of thee, and of thy beauty." Again Mary was willing to satisfy him, and again she consoled him with her presence; but because this loving queen can never injure any one, when she appeared to him the second time, not only she did not take from him the other eye, but she even restored to him the one he had lost.

PRAYER.

Oh great, excellent, and most glorious Lady, prostrate at the foot of thy throne, we adore thee from this valley of tears. We rejoice at the immense glory with which our Lord has enriched thee. Now that thou art really queen of heaven and of earth, ah, do not forget us thy poor servants. Do not disdain from the lofty throne, from which thou dost reign, to turn thy pitying eyes towards us miserable sinners. As

thou art so near the source of graces, thou art able so much the more to obtain them for us. In heaven thou seest more plainly our miseries, and therefore thou must pity and relieve us the more. Make us on earth thy faithful servants, that we may thus go to bless thee in paradise. On this day, when thou hast been made queen of the universe, we also consecrate ourselves to thy service. In thy great joy console us also this day, by accepting us for thy vassals. Thou, then, art our mother. Ah, most sweet mother! most amiable mother! thy altars are surrounded by many people who ask of thee, one to be healed of some malady, another to be relieved in his necessities, one prays thee for a good harvest, and another success in some litigation. We ask of thee graces more pleasing to thy heart. Obtain for us that we may be humble, detached from earth, resigned to the divine will. Obtain for us the holy love of God, a good death, and paradise. Oh Lady, change us from sinners to saints. Perform this miracle that will redound more to thy honor, than if thou didst restore sight to a thousand blind persons, or raise a thousand from the dead. Thou art so powerful with God, it is enough to say that thou art his mother, his most beloved, full of his grace; what can he then deny thee? Oh most lovely queen, we do not pretend to behold thee on the earth, but we desire to go and see thee in paradise: thou must obtain this for us. Thus we certainly hope. **Amen, amen.**

DISCOURSE IX.

ON THE DOLORS OF MARY.

Mary was queen of martyrs, because her martyrdom was longer and greater than that of all the martyrs.

Who can have a heart so hard that it will not melt on hearing of a most lamentable event which once happened in the world? There was a noble and holy mother who had but one only Son; and he was the most amiable that could be imagined, innocent, virtuous, beautiful, and most loving towards his mother; so much so, that he never had caused her the least displeasure, but always had showed her all respect, obedience, and affection. Hence the mother had placed on this Son all her earthly affections. Now what happened? It happened that this Son through envy, was falsely accused by his enemies and the judge, although he knew and confessed his innocence, yet, that he might not offend his enemies, condemned him to an infamous death, precisely as they had requested him to do. And this poor mother had to suffer the affliction of seeing that amiable and beloved Son so unjustly taken from her, in the flower of his age, by a barbarous death; for he was made to die in torment, drained of his blood before her own eyes in a public place, upon an infamous gibbet. Devout

souls, what do you say? Is this case and this unhappy mother worthy of compassion? Already you know of whom I speak. This Son so cruelly slain was our loving Redeemer, Jesus, and his mother was the blessed Virgin Mary, who, for love of us, was willing to see him offered up to the divine justice by the barbarity of men. This great pain, then, which Mary suffered for us—a pain which was more than a thousand deaths—merits our compassion and gratitude. And if we can return nothing else for so much love, at least let us for a little time to-day stop to consider the severity of the suffering by which Mary became queen of martyrs; for her great martyrdom exceeded in suffering that of all the martyrs,—being, in the first place the longest martyrdom; and in the second place, the greatest martyrdom.

First Point—As Jesus is called King of sorrows and King of martyrs, because he suffered in his life more than all the other martyrs, so is also Mary called, with reason, queen of the martyrs, having merited this title by suffering the greatest martyrdom that could be suffered, next to that of her Son. Hence she was justly named by Richard of St. Laurence the martyr of martyrs: "Martyr martyrum." And to her may be applied what Isaias said: He will crown thee with the crown of tribulation: "Coronans coronabit te tribulatione. For that suffering itself which exceeded the suffering of all the other martyrs united, was the

Cap. xxii. 18.

crown by which she was shown to be the queen of martyrs. That Mary was a true martyr cannot be doubted, as is proved by the Carthusian, Pelbart, Catharinus, and others; for it is an established opinion that suffering sufficient to cause death, constitutes martyrdom, although death may not then take place. St. John the Evangelist is revered as a martyr, although he did not die in the caldron of boiling oil, but came out more sound than he went in: "Vegetior exiverit quam intraverit."* It is sufficient to procure the glory of martyrdom, says St. Thomas, that any one should be obedient even to offer himself to death.† Mary was a martyr, says St. Bernard, not by the sword of the executioner, but by the bitter sorrow of her heart.‡ If her body was not wounded by the hand of the executioner, yet her blessed heart was pierced by grief at the passion of her Son; a grief sufficient to cause her not only one, but a thousand deaths. And from this we shall see that Mary was not only a true martyr, but that her martyrdom surpassed that of all the other martyrs, for it was a longer martyrdom, and, if I may thus express it, all her life was a long death.

The passion of Jesus commenced with his birth, as St. Bernard says ;§ and Mary also, in

* Brev. Rom. 6, Maj.

† Martyrium amplectitur id quod in obedientia summum esse potest, ut scilicet aliquis sit obediens usque ad mortem. 2, 2, q. 134, a. 3, ad 3.

‡ Non ferro carnificis, sed acerbo dolore cordis. Ap. Baldi. tom. 1, p. 146.

§ A nativitatis exordio, passio crucis simul exorta. Serm. 2, de Pass

all things like unto her Son, suffered her martyrdom through her whole life. The name of Mary, among its other significations, as the blessed Albertus Magnus affirms, signifies a *bitter sea:* "Mare amarum." Wherefore to her is applied the passage of Jeremias: Great as the sea is thy destruction: "Magna est enim velut mare contritio tua."† For as the sea is all salt and bitter, thus the life of Mary was always full of bitterness, at the sight of the passion of the Redeemer, which was ever present to her. It cannot be doubted that being more enlightened by the Holy Spirit than all the prophets, she better comprehended than they the predictions concerning the Messias, which they recorded in their holy Scriptures. Precisely this the angel revealed to St. Bridget.‡ Whence, as the same angel declared, the Virgin knowing how much the incarnate Word was to suffer for the salvation of men, even before she became his mother, and compassionating this innocent Saviour, who was to be so cruelly put to death for crimes not his own, she commenced, from that time, her great martyrdom.§

Her grief afterwards increased immeasurably when she was made mother of this Saviour. So

* Thr. ii. 13.

† Proculdubio est credendum, quod ipsa ex inspiratione Spiritus Sancti perfectius intellexit quicquid Prophetarum eloquia figurabant. Serm. Ang. c. 17.

‡ Ex Scripturis Deum incarnari intelligens, et quod tam diversis pœnis deberet cruciari, tribulationem non modicam sustinuit. Serm. Ang. c. 16.

that at the painful thought of all the sufferings which her poor Son was to endure, she indeed experienced, says Rupert the Abbot, a long martyrdom—a martyrdom continued through her whole life.* And exactly this was signified by the vision which St. Bridget had at Rome, in the church of St. Mary Major, where the blessed Virgin appeared to her with St. Simeon, and an angel, having a sword which was very long and red with blood; by which was prefigured the long and bitter grief that pierced the heart of Mary during her whole life.† Whence the above-named Rupert puts into the mouth of Mary the following words: Oh redeemed souls and my beloved children, do not pity me only for that hour in which I saw my dear Jesus dying in my presence, for the sword of sorrow, predicted to me by Simeon, pierced my soul during my whole life; when I was giving suck to my Son, when I was warming him in my arms, I already saw the bitter death that awaited him; consider then what long and cruel sorrows I must have endured.‡

Wherefore Mary might truly say in the words of David: My life is wasted with grief and my

* Tu longum præscia futuræ passionis filii tui, pertulisti martyrium. In Cant. c. 4.

† Rev. l. 7, c. 2.

‡ Nolite solam attendere horam illam qua dilectum meum vidi mori; nam Simeonis gladius, antequam pertransiret, longum per me transitum fecit. Cum igitur eum lactarem, foverem et prospicerem ejus mortem, quam prolixam me putatis pertulisse passionem? Loc. cit.

years in sighs.* My sorrow is continually before me: "Dolor meus in conspectu meo semper."† My life was wholly passed in grief and tears; for my grief, which was compassion for my beloved Son, never departed from before my eyes, seeing, as I did, continually the sufferings and death that he was one day to endure. The divine mother herself revealed to St. Bridget, that even after the death and ascension of her Son into heaven, the memory of his passion, whether she ate or worked, was deeply impressed and ever recent in her tender heart.‡ Taulerus therefore says, that Mary passed her whole life in perpetual sorrow; for her heart was always occupied with thoughts of sadness and of suffering.§

So that time, which usually mitigates the sorrows of the afflicted, did not relieve Mary; nay, time itself increased her sorrow, for as Jesus increased in years, on the one hand, he continually showed himself more lovely and amiable; and on the other, the time of his death was ever drawing nearer, and grief at having to lose him on this earth, continually increased in the heart of Mary. As the rose grows up among thorns, said the angel to St. Bridget, so the moth-

* Defecit in dolore vita mea, et anni mei in gemitibus. Psal. xxx. 11.

† Psal. xxxvii. 18.

‡ Tempore quo post ascensionem filii mei vixi, passio sua in corde meo fixa erat, ut sive comedebam, sive laborabam, quasi recens erat in memoria mea. Rev. l. 6, c. 65.

§ Beatissima Virgo pro tota vita fecit professionem doloris. Vit. Christ. c. 28.

er of God advanced in years in the midst of sufferings; and as the thorns increase with the growth of the rose, thus this rose selected by the Lord, Mary, as she increased in age, was so much the more pierced by the thorns of her dolors.* Having considered the length of this suffering, let us now pass on to the second point, namely, the consideration of its greatness.

Point Second.—Ah, Mary was not only queen of the martyrs, because her martyrdom was longer than that of all others, but also because it was the greatest of all. But who can measure its greatness? Jeremias appears to be unable to find any one with whom he may compare this mother of sorrows, when considering her great suffering at the death of her Son. "To what shall I compare thee, or to what shall I liken thee, oh daughter of Jerusalem; for great as the sea is thy destruction; who shall heal thee?"† Wherefore Cardinal Hugo, commenting on these words, says: Oh blessed Virgin, as the bitterness of the sea exceeds all other bitterness, so thy grief surpasses all other griefs.‡ Hence St. Anselm affirms, that if God, by a special miracle, had not preserved the life of Mary, her grief

* Sicut rosa crescere solet inter spinas ita B. Virgo in hoc mundo crevit inter tribulationes; et sicut, crescente rosa, crescunt spinæ; sic hæc electissima rosa Maria, quanto crescebat ætate, tanto tribulationum spinis pungebatur. Serm. Ang. c. 16.

† Cui comparabo te? vel cui assimilabo te, filia Jerusalem? Magna est enim velut mare contritio tua. Quis medebitur tui? Thren. ii. 1.

‡ Quemadmodum mare est in amaritudine excellens, ita tuæ contritioni nulla calamitas æquari potest.

would have been sufficient to cause her death at each moment of her life.* And St. Bernardine of Sienna even says, that the grief of Mary was so great, that if it were divided among all men, it would be enough to cause their immediate death.†

But let us consider the reasons why the martyrdom of Mary was greater than that of all the martyrs. In the first place, it must be remembered that the martyrs suffered their martyrdom in the body, by means of fire or steel; Mary suffered martyrdom in her soul; as St. Simeon had before prophesied: and thy own soul a sword shall pierce: "Et tuam ipisus animam pertransibit gladius:"‡ as if the holy old man had said to her: Oh holy Virgin, the bodies of the other martyrs will be torn with iron, but thou wilt be pierced and martyred in thy soul, by the passion of thy own Son. Now, as the soul is more noble than the body, so much greater was the suffering of Mary than that of all the martyrs; as Jesus Christ himself said to St. Catharine of Sienna: There is no comparison between the sufferings of the soul and the body; "Inter dolorem animæ et corporis nulla est comparatio." Whence the holy Abbot Arnold Carno-

* Utique, Domina, non crediderim te potuisse stimulos tanti cruciatus, quin vitam amitteres, sustinere; nisi ipse spiritus tui filii te confortaret. De Ec. Virg. c. 3.

† Tantus fuit dolor Virginis, quod si inter omnes creaturas, quæ dolorem pati possunt, divideretur, omnes subito interirent. To. 1, Serm. 67.

‡ Luc. ii. 35.

tensis says, that whoever had been present on Calvary at the great sacrifice of the immaculate Lamb, when he was dying on the cross, would have there beheld two great altars, one in the body of Jesus, the other in the heart of Mary: for there, at the same time that the Son sacrificed his body in death, Mary sacrificed her soul in compassion.*

Moreover, while the other martyrs, St. Antoninus says, † suffered by sacrificing their own lives, the blessed Virgin suffered by sacrificing the life of her Son, whom she loved far more than her own life; so that she not only suffered in spirit all that her Son suffered in body, but, moreover, the sight of the sufferings of her Son brought more grief to her heart than if she had endured them all in her own person. There can be no doubt that Mary suffered in her heart all the tortures by which she saw her beloved Jesus tormented. Every one knows that the sufferings of children are also the sufferings of their mothers, when they are the witnesses of them. St. Augustine, considering the anguish that the mother of the Macchabees experienced in witnessing the tortures which her sons endured, says: "She suffered in them all, because she loved them all, and endured with her eyes what they all endured in the flesh."‡ Thus also was it with Mary; all those

* Nimirum in tabernaculo illo duo videres altaria, aliud in pectore matris, aliud in corpore Christi; Christus carnem, Maria immolabat animam. Tr. de sep. verb. Do. in Cru.

† P. 1, tit. 15, c. 24.

‡ Illa videndo in omnibus passa est: quia amabat omnes, ferebat in oculis quod in carne omnes. Serm. 109, de Divers c. 6.

scourgings, torments, thorns, nails, and the cross, which tortured the innocent flesh of Jesus, entered at the same time into the heart of Mary to complete her martyrdom. He in the flesh, she in the heart suffered, writes St. Amadeus: "Ille carne, illa corde passa est."* So that as St. Lawrence Justinian says, the heart of Mary became as it were a mirror of the agonies of her Son, in which were seen the spitting, the scourging, the wounds, and all that Jesus suffered.† And St. Bonaventure remarks, that these wounds which were scattered all over the body of Jesus, were all united in one heart of Mary. ‡

The Virgin, then through compassion for her Son, was scourged, crowned with thorns, insulted, and nailed to the cross. Whence the same saint considering Mary on Mt. Calvary, where she was present with her dying Son, asks of her: Oh Lady, tell me where you then stood? Perhaps only at the foot of the cross! Might I not rather say: thou wast on the cross itself crucified with thy Son? § And Richard, remarking on the words of the Redeemer, which he spoke by the mouth of Isaias: "I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the Gentiles

* Hom. 5.

† Passionis Christi speculum effectum erat cor Virginis, in illo agnoscebantur sputa, convicia, verbera, vulnera. De Agon. Chri. c. 11.

‡ Singula vulnera per ejus corpus dispersa, in uno corde sunt unita. De Planctu. Virg. in Stim. Am.

§ O Domina mea ubi stabas? Nunquid tantum juxta crucem? Imo in cruce cum filio crucifixa eras. Loc. cit.

there is not a man with me,"* adds: Oh Lord, thou dost rightly say that in the work of human redemption thou didst suffer alone, and there was no man that could pity thee sufficiently; but there was a woman with thee, thy own mother, who suffered in her heart whatever thou didst suffer in thy body.†

But all this is saying only too little of the sorrows of Mary; for, as I have before said, she suffered more in seeing her beloved Jesus suffer, than if in her own person she had endured all the tortures and the death of her Son. Erasmus has written, speaking of parents, generally, that they feel the sufferings of their children more than their own.‡ But this is not always true. It was no doubt true of Mary, for she certainly loved her Son and his life far more than herself, and a thousand lives of her own. Therefore St. Amadeus well declares, that the afflicted mother, at the sorrowful sight of the agony of her beloved Jesus, suffered much more than if she herself had endured his whole passion.§ The reason is plain, since, as St. Bernard says: The soul is more where it loves, than where it lives:

* Torcular calcavi solus, et de gentibus non est vir mecum. Isa. lxiii. 3.

† Verum est, Domine, quod non est vir tecum, sed mulier una est tecum, quæ omnia vulnera quæ tu suscepisti in corpore, suscepit in corde.

‡ Parentes atrocius torquentur in liberis, quam in seipsis. Libell. de Machab.

§ Maria torquebatur magis, quam si torqueretur ex se; quoniam supra se incomparabiliter diligebat id unde dolebat. Cit. Hom. 5.

"Anima magis est ubi amat, quam ubi animat." And the Saviour himself had before said, that our heart is where our treasure is.* If Mary, then, through love, lived more in her Son than in herself, a much greater grief did she suffer at the death of her Son, than if the most cruel death in the world had been inflicted on her.

And here is to be considered the other circumstance that rendered the martyrdom of Mary far greater than the sufferings of all the martyrs, for in the passion of Jesus she suffered much, and she suffered without alleviation. The martyrs suffered under the torments which their tyrants inflicted upon them, but love to Jesus rendered their pains sweet and delightful. A St. Vincent suffered in his martyrdom; he was tortured on the rack, torn with hooks, burnt with red-hot iron plates; but St. Augustine says: One seemed to suffer, and another to speak: "Alius videbatur pati, alius loqui." The saint addressed the tyrant with such power, and with such contempt of his torments, that it seemed as if one Vincent suffered and another Vincent spoke, so greatly did his God, with the sweetness of his love, comfort him in the midst of his sufferings. A St. Boniface suffered; his body was torn with irons, sharp-pointed reeds were thrust between his nails and flesh, melted lead was poured into his mouth, and at the same time he could not often enough repeat: I give thanks to thee, oh Jesus Christ: "Gratias tibi ago, Domine Jesu Christe." A St. Mark and a

* Ubi thesaurus vester est, ibi et cor vestrum erit. Luc. xii. 34.

St. Marcellinus suffered; they were bound to a stake, their feet pierced by nails, and the tyrant appealed to them, saying: "Miserable beings, look at your condition, and save yourselves from these torments." And they answered: "What torments, what pain do you speak of? We have never feasted with more joy than now, when we are suffering with pleasure for the love of Jesus Christ."* A St. Lawrence suffered, but while he was burning on the grid-iron, the interior flames of love, as St. Leo says, was more powerful to cheer his soul, than the flames without were to torture his body.† Hence love made him so strong, that he even braved the tyrant by saying to him: Tyrant, if you wish to feed on my flesh, a part is sufficiently cooked, turn and eat: "Assatum est jam, versa et manduca." But in such torture and lingering death, how could the saint thus exult? Ah, St. Augustine answers, because, intoxicated with the wine of divine love, he felt neither torments nor death.‡

For the holy martyrs, the more they loved Jesus, the less they felt torments and death, and the sight alone of the sufferings of a crucified God was sufficient to console them. But was not our afflicted mother, also, thus consoled by love for her Son, and the sight of his sufferings? No, for this very Son who suffered, was

* Nunquam tam jucunde epulati sumus, quam cum hæc libenter Jesu Christi amore perferimus.

† Segnior fuit ignis qui foris ussit, quam qui intus accendit. In. Nat. S. Laur.

‡ In illa longa morte, in illis tormentis illo calice ebrius torments non sentit. Tract. 27.

the whole cause of her grief; and the love she bore him was her only, and too cruel executioner; for the whole martyrdom of Mary consisted in seeing and pitying her innocent and beloved Son, who suffered so much. Therefore, the more she loved him, the more bitter and inconsolable was her sorrow. "Great as the sea is thy destruction, who shall heal thee?"* Ah, queen of heaven, love hath alleviated the sufferings of other martyrs, and has healed their wounds; but who has ever soothed thy great sorrow? Who has ever healed the cruel wounds of thy heart? Who will heal thee? "Quis medebitur tui ?" if that same Son, who could give thee consolation, was by his sufferings the sole cause of thy sorrows, and the love that thou didst bear him, caused all thy martyrdom? Therefore, whilst the other martyrs, as Diez remarks, are all represented with the instrument of their passion —St. Paul with the sword, St Andrew with the cross, St. Lawrene with the gridiron—Mary is represented with her dead Son in her arms, because Jesus himself alone was the instrument of her martyrdom, by reason of the love which she bore him. In a few words St. Bernard confirms all I have said: With the other martyrs their great love soothed the anguish of their martyrdom; but the more the blessed Virgin loved, so much the more she suffered, and so much more cruel was her martyrdom.†

* Magna est velut mare contritio tua; quis medebitur tui?

† In aliis martyribus magnitudo amoris dolorem lenivit passionis;

It is certain that the greater is our love for a thing, the greater pain we feel in losing it. The loss of a brother certainly afflicts us more than the loss of a beast of burden ; and the death of a son, more than that of a friend. Now Cornelius à Lapide says, that to comprehend how great was the grief of Mary at the death of her Son, we should comprehend how great was the love she bore him.* But who can measure that love? The blessed Amadeus says, that in the heart of Mary two kinds of love to her Jesus were united: the supernatural love with which she loved him as her God, and the natural love with which she loved him as her son;† so that, of these two loves, one only was formed, but a love so immense that William of Paris even said, that the blessed Virgin loved Jesus to such a degree that a pure creature could not love him more.‡ And Richard of St. Laurence says, as there was no love like her love, so there was no grief like her grief.§ If, therefore, the love of Mary for her Son was immense, immense, also, must have been her grief in losing him by death. Where love

sed beata Virgo quanto plus amavit, tanto plus doluit tantoque ipsius martyrium gravius fuit. Ap. Crois. Vit. Mar. s. 23.

* Ut scias quantus fuerit dolor B. Virginis, cogita quantus fuerit amor.

† Duæ dilectiones in unam convenerant et ex duobus amoribus factus est amor unus, cum Virgo mater filio divinitatis amorem impenderet, et in Deo amorem nato exhiberet. Hom. 5, de Laud. V.

‡ Quantum capere potuit puri hominis modus.

§ Unde sicut non fuit amor sicut amor ejus, ita non fuit dolor sicut dolor ejus.

is greatest, says blessed Albertus Magnus, there grief is greatest: "Ubi summus amor, ibi summus dolor."

Let us imagine, then, that the divine mother, standing near her Son dying upon the cross, and justly applying to herself the words of Jeremias, says to us: "Oh, all ye that pass by the way attend, and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow."* Oh ye that are passing your lives upon this earth, and have no pity for me, stop a while to look upon me, now that I behold that beloved Son dying before my eyes: and then see if among all who are afflicted and tormented, there be sorrow like to my sorrow." No, answers St. Bonaventure, there can be found no sorrow, oh afflicted mother, more bitter than thine, for no son can be found more dear than thine † Ah, there has never been in the world, says St. Lawrence Justinian, a son more worthy of love than Jesus, nor a mother who loved her son more than Mary; if, then, there has never been in the world a love like the love of Mary, how can there be a grief like the grief of Mary?‡

Therefore, St. Ildephonsus did not hesitate to affirm, that it was little to say that the sufferings

* O vos omnes qui transitis per viam attendite et videte, si est dolor sicut dolor meus. Thren. i. 12.

† Nullus dolor amarior, quia nulla proles charior. De Compas. Virg. c. 2.

‡ Non fuit talis filius, non fuit talis mater; non fuit tanta charitas, non fuit dolor tantus. Ideo quanto dilexit tenerius, tanta vulnerata est profundius. Lib. 3, de Laud. Virg.

of the Virgin exceeded all the torments of the martyrs, even were they united together.* And St. Anselm adds, that the most cruel tortures inflicted upon the holy martyrs were light or nothing, in comparison with the martyrdom of Mary.† St. Basil likewise writes, that as the sun surpasses in splendor all the other planets, so Mary in her sufferings exceeded the sufferings of all the other martyrs.‡ A certain learned author § concludes with an admirable sentiment, saying, that so great was the sorrow which this tender mother suffered in the passion of Jesus, that she alone could worthily compassionate the death of a God made man.

But St. Bonaventura, addressing the blessed Virgin, says: Oh Lady, why hast thou wished to go and sacrifice thyself also on Calvary? Was not a crucified God sufficient to redeem us, that thou his mother wouldst be crucified also? ‖ Indeed, the death of Jesus was more than enough to save the world, and also an infinity of worlds; but this good mother wished, for the love she bore us, likewise to aid the cause of our salvation

* Parum est Mariam in passione filii tam acerbos pertulisse dolores, ut omnium martyrum collective tormenta superaret. Ap. Sinisc. Mart. de Mar. Cons. 36.

† Quicquid crudelitatis inflictum est corporibus martyrum, leve fuit, aut potius nihil comparatione tuæ passionis. De Exc. Virg. c. 5.

‡ Virgo universos martyres tantum excedit, quantum sol reliqua astra.

§ P. Pinam.

‖ O Domina, cur ivisti immolari pro nobis? Non sufficiebat filii passio, nisi crucifigeretur et mater? Ap. Pac. Exc. 10, in Sal. Ang.

with the merits of the sorrows which she offered for us on Calvary. And, therefore, says the blessed Albertus Magnus, as we are indebted to Jesus for what he suffered for love of us, we are also to Mary for the martyrdom which she, in the death of her Son, voluntarily suffered for our salvation.* I have added voluntarily, since, as the angel revealed to St. Bridget, this our so merciful and kind mother was willing to suffer any pain, rather than to see souls unredeemed or left in their former perdition.† It may be said that this was the only consolation of Mary in the midst of her great sorrow at the passion of her Son, to see the lost world redeemed by his death, and men, who were his enemies, reconciled with God. Grieving, she rejoiced, says Simon da Cassia, because the sacrifice was offered for the redemption of all, by which wrath was appeased.‡

Such love as that of Mary merits our gratitude, and let us show our gratitude by meditating upon and compassionating her sorrows. But of this she complained to St. Bridget, that very few pitied her, and most lived forgetful of her sorrows. "I look around upon all who are in the world, if perchance there may be any to pity

* Sicut totus mundus obligatur Deo propter passionem, sic obligatur Dominæ propter compassionem. Sup. Miss. cap. 20.

† Sic pia et misericors est, et fuit, quod maluit omnes tribulationes sufferre, quam quod animæ non redimerentur. Rev. l. 3, c. 30.

‡ Lætabatur dolens quod offerebatur sacrificium in redemptionem omnium quo placabatur. De Gest. D. l. 2. c. 27.

me, and meditate upon my sorrows, and truly I find very few. Therefore, my daughter, though I am forgotten by many, at least do not thou forget me; behold my anguish, and imitate, as far as thou canst, my grief."* In order to understand how much the Virgin is pleased by our remembrance of her dolors, it is sufficient to relate, that in the year 1239, she appeared to seven of her servants, who then became the founders of the order of the Servants of Mary, with a black garment in her hand, and told them that if they wished to please her, they should often meditate upon her dolors; and therefore she wished, in memory of them, that they would hereafter wear that garment of mourning.† And Jesus Christ himself revealed to the blessed Veronica Binasco, that he takes more pleasure, as it were, in seeing his mother compassionated than himself; for thus he addressed her: "My daughter, the tears shed for my passion are dear to me; but loving with so great love my mother Mary, the meditation of the dolors which she suffered at my death is more dear to me." ‡

Wherefore the graces are very great which Jesus promises to those who are devoted to the dolors of Mary. Pelbart relates,§ that it was

* Respicio ad omnes qui in mundo sunt, si forte sint aliqui qui compatiantur mihi, et recogitent dolorem meum; et valde paucos invenio. Ideo filia mea, licet a multis oblita sim, tu tamen non obviscaris mei, vide dolorem meum, et imitare quam tum potes, et dole. Rev. l. 2, c. 24.

† Gian. Cent. Serv. l. 1, c. 14. ‡ Ap. Bolland. 13, Jan

§ Stellar. l. 3, p. 3, a. 3.

revealed to St. Elizabeth, that St. John the Evangelist, after the blessed Virgin was assumed into heaven, desired to see her again. This favor was granted him; his dear mother appeared to him, and Jesus Christ with her; and he then heard Mary asking of her Son some peculiar grace for those who were devoted to her dolors; and Jesus promised her for them the four following special graces: 1st. That those who invoke the divine mother by her sorrows, before death will merit to obtain true repentance of all their sins. 2d. That he will protect such in their tribulations, especially at the hour of death. 3d. That he will impress upon them the memory of his passion, and that they shall have their reward for it in heaven. 4th. That he will commit such devout servants to the hands of Mary, that she may dispose of them according to her pleasure, and obtain for them all the graces she desires. In proof of this, let us see in the following example how devotion to the dolors of Mary may aid our eternal salvation.

EXAMPLE

We read in the revelations of St. Bridget,* that there was once a lord as noble by birth as he was low and sinful in his habits. He had given himself by an express compact as a slave to the devil, and had served him for sixty successive years, leading such a life as may

* L. 6, c. 97.

easily be imagined, and never approaching the sacraments. Now, this prince was about to die and Jesus Christ, in his compassion, commanded St. Bridget to tell his confessor to visit him, and exhort him, to make his confession. The confessor went, and the sick man told him that he had no need of a confessor, for that he had often made his confession. The confessor visited him a second time, and that poor slave of hell persevered in his obstinate determination not to make his confession. Jesus again directed the saint to tell the confessor to go to him again. He obeyed, and this third time related to him the revelation made to the saint, and that he had returned so many times because the Lord, who desired to show him mercy, had directed him to do so. On hearing this the dying man was moved, and began to weep. But how, he exclaimed, can I be pardoned, when for sixty years I have served the devil, made myself his slave, and have laden my soul with innumerable sins?" "Son," answered the father, encouraging him, "do not doubt: if you repent of them, in the name of God I promise you pardon." Then beginning to gain confidence, he said to the confessor: "Father, I believed myself lost, and despaired of salvation; but now I feel a sorrow for my sins, which encourages me to trust; and as God has not yet abandoned me, I wish to make my confession." And in fact on that day he made his confession four times with great sorrow; the next day he re-

ceived communion, and on the sixth he died, contrite and entirely resigned. After his death, Jesus Christ further revealed to St. Bridget, that this sinner was saved, and was in purgatory, and that he had been saved by the intercession of the Virgin, his mother; for the deceased, although he had led so sinful a life, yet had always preserved devotion to her dolors, whenever he remembered them he pitied her.

PRAYER.

Oh my afflicted mother! queen of martyrs and of sorrows, thou hast shed so many tears for thy Son, who died for my salvation, and yet what will thy tears avail me, if I am lost? By the merits, then, of thy dolors, obtain for me a true sorrow for my sins, and a true amendment of life, with a perpetual and tender compassion for the passion of Jesus and thy own sufferings. And if Jesus and thou, being so innocent, have suffered so much for me, obtain for me that I, who am deserving of hell, may also suffer something for love of you. O Lady, I will say to thee with St. Bonaventure, if I have offended thee, wound my heart in punishment; if I have served thee, now I beg to be wounded as a reward. It is a shameful thing to see our Lord Jesus wounded, and thee wounded with him, and I uninjured.* Finally, oh my mother,

* O Domina, si te offendi pro justitia cor meum vulnera; si tibi servivi, nunc pro mercede, peto, vulnera. Opprobriosum est videre Dominum Jesum vulneratum, te convulneratum, et me illæsum.

by the grief thou didst experience on seeing thy Son before thy eyes bow his head and expire upon the cross, I entreat of thee to obtain for me a good death. Ah, do not cease, oh advocate of sinn rs, to assist my afflicted and struggling soul in that great passage that it has to make into eternity. And, because at that time it may easily be the case that I shall have lost the use of speech with which to invoke thy name, and that of Jesus, who are all my hope, therefore I now invoke thy Son and thee to succor me at that last moment, and I say: Jesus and Mary, to you I commend my soul. Amen.

REFLECTIONS

ON EACH OF THE SEVEN DOLORS OF MARY IN PARTICULAR.

ON THE FIRST DOLOR.

OF ST. SIMEON'S PROPHECY.

In this valley of tears, every man is born to weep, and every one must suffer those afflictions that daily befall him. But how much more miserable would life be, if every one knew also the future evils which are to afflict him! Too unhappy would he be, says Seneca, whose fate was such.* The Lord exercises his compassion towards us, namely, that he does not make

* Calamitosus esset animus futuri præscius et ante miserias miser Ep. 98.

known to us the crosses that await us; that if we are to suffer them, at least we may suffer them only once. But he did not exercise this compassion with Mary, who, because God wished her to be the queen of dolors, and in all things like his Son, and to see always before her eyes, and to suffer continually all the sorrows that awaited her; and those were the sufferings of the passion and death of her beloved Jesus. For St. Simeon in the temple, after having received the divine child in his arms, predicted to her that this child was to be the mark for all the opposition and persecution of men: "Set for a sign which shall be contradicted;" and that therefore the sword of sorrow should pierce her soul: "And thy own soul a sword shall pierce."*

The holy Virgin herself said to St. Matilda, that at the announcement of St. Simeon all her joy was changed into sorrow.† For, as it was revealed to St. Theresa, the blessed mother, although she knew before this that the life of her Son would be sacrificed for the salvation of the world, yet she then learned more particularly and distinctly the sufferings and cruel death that awaited her poor Son. She knew that he would be contradicted in all things. Contradicted in doctrine; for instead of being believed, he would be esteemed a blasphemer for teaching that he was the Son of God, as the impious Cai-

* Positus est hic in signum cui contradicetur. Et tuam ipsius animam doloris gladius pertransibit. Luc. ii. 35.

† Omnis lætitia mea ad illa verba in mœrore conversa est.

aphas declared him to be, saying: "He hath blasphemed, he is guilty of death."* Contradicted in his reputation, for he was noble, of royal lineage, and was despised as a peasant: "Is not this the carpenter's son?"† "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?"‡ He was wisdom itself, and was treated as an ignorant man: "How doth this man know letters, having never learned?"§ As a false prophet: "And they blindfolded him and smote his face . . . . saying: "Prophesy who is this that struck thee."‖ He was treated as a madman: "He is mad, why hear you him?"¶ As a wine-bibber, a glutton, and a friend of sinners: "Behold a man that is a glutton, and a drinker of wine, a friend of publicans and sinners."** As a sorcerer: "By the prince of devils he casteth out devils."†† As a heretic and possessed person: "Do we not say well of thee, that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil ?"‡‡ In a word, Jesus was considered as so bad and notorious a man, that no trial was necessary to condemn him, as the Jews said to Pilate: "If he were not a malefactor, we would not have

* Blasphemavit, reus est mortis. Matt. xxvi. 65, 66.

† Non hic fabri filius? Matt. xiii. 55.

‡ Nonne hic est faber, filius Mariæ? Matt. vi. 3.

§ Quomodo hic literas scit, cum non didicerit. Joan. vii. 15.

‖ Et velaverunt eum, et percutiebant faciem ejus . . . . dicentes: Prophetiza, quis est qui te percussit. Luc. xxii. 64.

¶ Insanit, quid eum auditis? Joan. x. 20.

** Ecce homo devorator, et bibens vinum, amicus publicanorum et peccatorum. Luc. vii. 34.

†† In principe dæmoniorum ejicit dæmonia. Matt. ix. 34.

‡‡ Nonne bene dicimus nos, quia Samaritanus es tu, et dæmonium habes? Joan. viii. 48.

delivered him up to thee."* He was contradicted in his soul, for even his eternal Father, in order to give place to the divine justice, contradicted him by not wishing to hear him when he prayed to him, saying: "Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me;"† and abandoned him to fear, weariness, and sadness, so that our afflicted Lord said: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death."‡ His interior suffering even caused him to sweat blood. Contradicted and persecuted, in a word, in his body and in his life, for he was tortured in all his sacred members: in his hands, in his feet, in his face, and in his head, in his whole body, till, drained to the last drop of his blood, he died an ignominious death on the cross.

When David, in the midst of all his pleasures and royal grandeur, heard from Nathan the prophet, that his son should die—"The child that is born to thee shall surely die"§—he could find no peace, but wept, fasted, and slept upon the ground. Mary received with the greatest calmness the announcement that her Son should die, and peacefully continued to submit to it; but what grief she must have continually suffered, seeing this amiable Son always near her, hearing from him words of eternal life,

* Si non esset hic malefactor, non tibi tradidissemus eum. Joan. xviii. 30.

† Pater mi, si possibile est, transeat a me calix iste. Matt. xxvi. 39.

‡ Tristis es anima mea usque ad mortem. Matt. xxvi. 38.

§ Filius qui natus est tibi, morte morietur. 2 Reg. xii. 14.

and beholding his holy demeanor. Abraham suffered great affliction during the three days he passed with his beloved Isaac, after he knew that he was to lose him. Oh God! not for three days, but for thirty three years, Mary had to endure a like sorrow. Like, do I say? A sorrow as much greater as the Son of Mary was more lovely than the son of Abraham. The blessed Virgin herself revealed to St. Bridget,* that while she lived on the earth there was not an hour when this grief did not pierce her soul: As often, she continued, as I looked upon my Son, as often as I wrapped him in his swaddling clothes, as often as I saw his hands and his feet, so often was my soul overwhelmed as it were with a fresh sorrow, because I considered how he would be crucified.† Rupert the Abbot, contemplating Mary, while she was suckling her Son, imagines her addressing him in these words: "A bundle of myrrh is my beloved to me, he shall abide between my breasts."‡ Ah, my Son, I clasp the in my arms, because thou art so dear to me; but the dearer thou art to me, the more thou dost become to me a bundle of myrrh and of sorrow, when I think of thy sufferings. Mary, says St. Bernardine of Sienna,§ considered that

* Lib. 6, Rev. c. 9.

† Quoties aspiciebam filium meum, quoties involvebam eum pannis, quoties videbam ejus manus et pedes; toties animus meus quasi novo dolore absorptus est; quia cogitabam, quomodo crucifigeretur. Lib. 6, c. 57.

‡ Fasciculus mirrhæ dilectus meus mihi, inter ubera mea commorabitur. Cant. i. 12.

§ Tom. 3, Serm. 2, a 3, c. 1.

the strength of the saints was to pass through death; the beauty of paradise to be deformed; the Lord of the universe to be bound as a criminal; the Creator of all things to be livid with stripes; the Judge of all to be condemned; the glory of heaven despised; the King of kings to be crowned with thorns, and treated as a mock king.

Father Engelgrave writes, that it was revealed to the same St. Bridget, that the afflicted mother, knowing all that her Son would have to suffer, suckling him, thought of the gall and vinegar; when she swathed him, of the cords with which he was to be bound; when she bore him in her arms, she thought of him being nailed to the cross; and when he slept, she thought of his death.* As often as she put on him his clothes, she reflected that they would one day be torn from him, that he might be crucified; and when she beheld his sacred hands and feet, and thought of the nails that were to pierce them, as Mary said to St. Bridget: "My eyes filled with tears, and my heart was tortured with grief."†

The evangelist says, that as Jesus Christ advanced in years, so also he advanced in wisdom

* Eum lactans cogitabat de felle et aceto; quando fasciis involvebat, funes cogitabat quibus ligandus erat; quando gestabat, cogitabat in cruce confixum; quando dormiebat, cogitabat mortuum. Tom. 1, Ev. Lu. Dom. infr. Oct. Nat. s. 1.

† Oculi mei replebantur lacrymis, et cor meum torquebatur dolora Lib. 6, c. 57, et l. 7, c. 7.

and in grace with God and men.* That is, he advanced in wisdom and in grace before men or in their estimation; and before God, according to St. Thomas,† inasmuch as all his works would continually have availed to increase his merit, if from the beginning grace in its complete fulness had not been conferred on him by virtue of the hypostatic union. But if Jesus advanced in the esteem and love of others, how much more did he advance in Mary's love! But oh God, as love increased in her, the more increased in her the grief of having to lose him by a death so cruel. And the nearer the time of the passion of her Son approached, with so much greater pain did that sword of sorrow, predicted by St. Simeon, pierce the heart of the mother; precisely this the angel revealed to St. Bridget, saying: "That sword of sorrow was every hour drawing nearer to the Virgin as the time for the passion of her Son drew nearer."‡

If, then, Jesus our King and his most holy mother did not refuse, for love of us, to suffer during their whole life such cruel pains, there is no reason that we should complain if we suffer a little. Jesus crucified once appeared to sister Magdalene Orsini, a Dominican nun, when she had been long suffering a great trial, and en-

* Et Jesus proficiebat sapientia et ætate, et gratia apud Deum, et homines. Luc. ii. 23.

† 3, p. q. 7, art. 12

‡ Ille doloris gladius Virgini omni hora tanto se propius approximabat, quanto Filius passionis tempori magis appropinquabat. Fer. 6, lect. 2, c. 16.

couraged her to remain with him on the cross with that sorrow that was afflicting her. Sister Magdalene answered him complainingly: "Oh Lord, thou didst suffer on the cross only three hours, but it is more than three years that I have been suffering this cross." Then the Redeemer replied: "Ah! ignorant soul, what dost thou say? I, from the first moment I was conceived, suffered in heart what I afterwards suffered on the cross." If, then, we too suffer any affliction and complain, let us imagine that Jesus and his mother Mary are saying to us the same words.

EXAMPLE.

Father Roviglione, of the Company of Jesus, relates,* that a certain youth practised the devotion of visiting every day an image of the sorrowful Mary, in which she was represented with seven swords piercing her heart. One night the unhappy youth fell into mortal sin. Going next morning to visit the image, he saw in the heart of the blessed Virgin not only seven, but eight swords. As he stood gazing at this, he heard a voice saying to him, that this sin had added the eighth sword to the heart of Mary. This softened his hard heart; he went immediately to confession, and through the intercession of his advocate, recovered the divine grace.

PRAYER.

Oh my blessed mother, not one sword only, but as many swords as I have committed sins have I

* Fasc. di Rose, p. 2, c. 2.

added to those seven in thy heart. Ah, my Lady, thy sorrows are not due to thee who art innocent, but to me who am guilty. But since thou hast wished to suffer so much for me, ah, by thy merits obtain for me great sorrow for my sins, and patience under the trials of this life, which will always be light in comparison with my demerits, for I have often merited hell. Amen.

ON THE SECOND DOLOR.

OF THE FLIGHT OF JESUS INTO EGYPT.

As the stag, wounded by an arrow, carries the pain with him wherever he goes, because he carries with him the arrow that has wounded him; thus the divine mother, after the prophecy of St. Simeon, as we saw in our consideration of the first grief, always carried her sorrow with her by the continual remembrance of the passion of her Son. Ailgrin, explaining this passage of the Canticles, "The hairs of thy head as the purple of the king bound in the channel," * says: These hairs of Mary were her continual thoughts of the passion of Jesus, which kept always before her eyes the blood which was one day to flow from his wounds. Thy mind, oh Mary, and thy thoughts tinged in the blood of the passion of our Lord, were always moved with sorrow as if they actually saw the blood flowing from his

* Et comæ capitis tui sicut purpura regis vincta canalibus. C. 7, v. 5.

wounds.* Thus her Son himself was that arrow in the heart of Mary, who, the more worthy of love he showed himself to her, always wounded her the more with the sorrowful thought that she should lose him by so cruel a death. Let us now pass to the consideration of the second sword of sorrow which wounded Mary, in the flight of her infant Jesus into Egypt from the persecution of Herod.

Herod having heard that the expected Messiah was born, foolishly feared that the new-born King would deprive him of his kingdom. Hence St. Fulgentius, reproving him for his folly, thus says: "Why, oh Herod, art thou thus disturbed? This King who is born has not come to conquer kings by arms, but to subjugate them, in a wonderful manner, by his death."† The impious Herod, therefore, waited to learn from the holy magi where the King was born, that he might take from him his life; but finding himself deceived by the magi, he ordered all the infants that could be found in the neighborhood of Bethlehem to be put to death. But an angel appeared in a dream to St. Joseph, and said to him: "Arise, and take the child and his mother, and fly into Egypt."‡ According to Gerson,

* Mens tua, O Maria, et cogitationes tuæ tinctæ in sanguine dominicæ passionis, sic affectæ semper fuere, quasi recenter viderent sanguinem de vulneribus profluentem. In Cant. c. 7, v. 5.

† Quid est quod sic turbaris Herodes? Rex iste qui natus est non venit reges pugnando superare sed moriendo mirabiliter subjugare. Serm. 5, de Epiph.

‡ Surge et accipe puerum, et matrem ejus et fuge in Egyptum. Matth. ii. 13.

immediately, on that very night, Joseph made this command known to Mary; and taking the infant Jesus, they commenced their journey, as it seems clearly from the Gospel itself: "Who arose and took the child and his mother by night, and retired into Egypt." Oh God, as blessed Albertus Magnus says in the name of Mary, must he, then, who came to save men flee from men? "Debet fugere qui salvator est mundi?"* And then the afflicted Mary knew that already the prophecy of Simeon, regarding her Son, was beginning to be verified: "He is set for a sign which shall be contradicted." † Seeing that scarcely is he born, when he is persecuted to death. What suffering it must have been to the heart of Mary, writes St. John Chrysostom, to hear the tidings of that cruel exile of herself with her Son! Flee from thy friends to strangers, from the holy temple of the only true God, to the temples of demons. What greater tribulation than that a new-born child, clinging to its mother's bosom, should be forced to fly with the mother herself! ‡

Every one can imagine how much Mary must have suffered on this journey. It was a long distance to Egypt. Authors generally agree with Barrada § that it was four hundred miles;

* Qui consurgens accepit puerum et matrem ejus nocte, et secessit in Egyptum. Matth. ii. 14.

† Positus est hic in signum cui contradicetur.

‡ Fuge a tuis ad extraneos, a templo ad dæmonum fana. Quæ major tribulatio, quam quod recens natus a collo matris pendens cum ipsa matre paupercula fugere cogatur?

§ 3, Lib. 10, c. 8.

so that at least it was a journey of thirty days. The way, as St. Bonaventure describes it, was rough, unknown, through woods, and little frequented.* The season was winter, and therefore they had to travel in snow, rain, wind, and storms, and through bad and difficult roads. Mary was then fifteen years of age, a delicate virgin, unaccustomed to such journeys. They had no servant to attend them. Joseph and Mary, said St. Peter Chrysologus, had no man-servant nor maid-servant; they were themselves both masters and servants.† Oh God, how piteous a spectacle it was to see that tender Virgin, with that newly born infant in her arms wandering through this world! St. Bonaventure asks, Where did they obtain food? Where did they rest at night? How were they lodged?‡ What other food could they have, than a piece of hard bread which Joseph brought with him or begged in charity? Where could they have slept (particularly in the two hundred miles of desert through which they travelled, where, as authors relate, there were neither houses nor inns) except on the sand, or under some tree in the wood, in the open air, exposed to robbers, or those wild beasts with which Egypt abounded? Ah, if any one had met these three greatest personages of the world,

* Viam silvestrem, obscuram, asperam, et inhabitam.

† Joseph et Maria non habent famulum, non ancillam; ipsi domini et famuli.

‡ Quomodo faciebant de victu? Ubi nocte quiescebant? Quomodo hospitabantur. De Vit. Chr.

what would he have believed them to be but three poor, roving beggars?

They lived in Egypt, according to Brocard and Jansenius, in a district called Maturea, though, according to St. Anselm, they dwelt in Heliopolis, first called Memphis, and now Cairo. And here let us consider the great poverty they must have suffered for the seven years they were there, as St. Antoninus, St. Thomas, and others assert. They were foreigners, unknown, without revenues, without money, without kindred; hardly were they able to support themselves by their humble labors. As they were destitute, says St. Basil, it is manifest what effort they must have made to obtain there the necessaries of life.* Moreover, Landolph of Saxony has written, and let it be repeated for the consolation of the poor, that so great was the poverty of Mary there, that sometimes she had not so much as a morsel of bread, when her Son, forced by hunger, asked it of her.†

St. Matthew also relates that when Herod was dead, the angel again appeared, in a dream, to St. Joseph, and directed him to return to Judea. St. Bonaventure, speaking of his return, considers the greater pain of the blessed Virgin, on account of the sufferings which Jesus must have endured in that journey, having arrived at about the age of seven years—an age, says the saint, when he was so large that he could not be

* Cum enim essent egeni, manifestum est quod sudores frequentabant necessaria vitæ inde sibi quærentes.

† Aliquando filius famem patiens panem petit, nec unde dare mater habuit. In Vit. Christi. c. 13.

carried, and so small that he could not go without assistance.*

The sight, then, of Jesus and Mary wandering like fugitives through this world, teaches us that we should also live as pilgrims on the earth, detached from the goods which the world offers us, as having soon to leave them and go to eternity. "We have not here a lasting city, but seek one that is to come."† To which St. Augustine adds: Thou art a stranger, thou givest a look, and then passest on: "Hospes es, vides et transis." It also teaches us to embrace crosses, for we cannot live in this world without a cross. The blessed Veronica da Binasco, an Augustinian nun, was carried in spirit to accompany Mary and the infant Jesus in this journey to Egypt, and at the end of it the divine mother said to her: "Child, hast thou seen through what difficulties we have reached this place? Now learn that no one receives graces without suffering." He who wishes to feel least the sufferings of this life, must take Jesus and Mary with him: "Accipe puerum et matrem ejus." For him who lovingly bears in his heart this Son and this mother, all sufferings become light, and even sweet and dear. Let us then love them, let us console Mary by receiving her Son within our hearts, whom, even now, men continue to persecute with their sins.

* Sic magnus est, ut portari non valeat; et sic parvus quod per se ire non potest.

† Non habemus hic manentem civitatem, sed futuram inquirimus. Heb. xiii. 14.

EXAMPLE.

One day the most holy Mary appeared to the blessed Colletta, a Franciscan nun, and showed her the infant Jesus in a basin, torn in pieces, and then said to her: "Thus sinners continually treat my Son, renewing his death and my sorrows; oh, my daughter, pray for them that they may be converted."* Similar to this is that other vision which appeared to the venerable sister Jane, of Jesus and Mary, also a Franciscan nun. As she was one day meditating on the infant Jesus, persecuted by Herod, she heard a great noise, as of armed people, who were pursuing some one; and then appeared before her a most beautiful child, who was fleeing in great distress, and cried to her: "My Jane, help me, hide me; I am Jesus of Nazareth, I am flying from sinners who wish to kill me, and who persecute me as Herod did: do thou save me."†

PRAYER.

Then, oh Mary, even after thy Son hath died by the hands of men who persecuted him unto death, have not these ungrateful men yet ceased from persecuting him with their sins, and continuing to afflict thee, oh mother of sorrows? And I also, oh God, have been one of these. Ah, my most sweet mother, obtain for me tears to weep for such ingratitude. And then, by the sufferings thou didst experience in the journey to Egypt, assist me in the journey that I am

* Ap. P. Genev. Serv. Dol. di Mar. † Loc. cit.

making to eternity, that at length I may go to unite with thee in loving my persecuted Saviour, in the country of the blessed. Amen.

ON THE THIRD DOLOR.

OF THE LOSS OF JESUS IN THE TEMPLE.

St. James the Apostle has said, that our perfection consists in the virtue of patience. "And patience hath a perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, failing in nothing."* The Lord having then given us the Virgin Mary as an example of perfection, it was necessary that she should be laden with sorrows, that in her we might admire and imitate her heroic patience. The dolor that we are this day to consider is one of the greatest which our divine mother suffered during her life, namely, the loss of her Son in the temple. He who is born blind is little sensible of the pain of being deprived of the light of day; but to him who has once had sight and enjoyed the light, it is a great sorrow to find himself deprived of it by blindness. And thus it is with those unhappy souls who, being blinded by the mire of this earth, have but little knowledge of God, and therefore scarcely feel pain at not finding him. On the contrary, the man who, illuminated with celestial light, has been made worthy to find by love the sweet

* Patientia autem opus perfectum habet, ut sitis perfecti et integri, in nullo deficientes. Jac. i. 4.

presence of the highest good, oh God, how he mourns when he finds himself deprived of it!

From this we can judge how painful must have been to Mary, who was accustomed to enjoy constantly the sweet presence of Jesus, that third sword which wounded her, when she lost him in Jerusalem, and was separated from him for three days.

In the second chapter of St. Luke we read that the blessed Virgin, being accustomed to visit the temple every year at the paschal season, with Joseph her spouse and Jesus, once went when he was about twelve years old, and Jesus remained in Jerusalem, though she was not aware of it, for she thought he was in company with others. When she reached Nazareth she inquired for her Son, and not finding him there, she returned immediately to Jerusalem to seek him, but did not succeed until after three days. Now let us imagine what distress that afflicted mother must have experienced in those three days in which she was searching everywhere for her Son, with the spouse in the Canticles: "Have you seen him whom my soul loveth?"* But she could hear no tidings of him. Oh, with how much greater tenderness must Mary, overcome with fatigue, and yet not having found her beloved Son, have repeated those words of Ruben, concerning his brother Joseph: The boy doth not appear, and whither shall I go? "Puer non comparet, et ego quo ibo?" My Jesus doth not appear, and I know not what to do that I may

* Num quem diligit anima mea vidistis? Cant. iii. 3.

find him; but where shall I go without my treasure? Weeping continually, she repeated during these three days with David: "My tears have been my bread day and night, whilst it is said to me daily, Where is thy God ?* Wherefore Pelbart with reason says, that during those nights the afflicted mother had no rest, but wept and prayed without ceasing to God, that he would enable her to find her Son.† And, according to St. Bernard, often during that time did she repeat to her Son himself the words of the spouse: "Show me where thou feedest, where thou liest in the mid-day, lest I begin to wander."‡ My Son, tell me where thou art, that I may no longer wander, seeking thee in vain.

Some writers assert, and not without reason, that this dolor was not only one of the greatest, but that it was the greatest and most painful of all. For in the first place, Mary in her other dolors had Jesus with her; she suffered when St. Simeon uttered the prophecy in the temple; she suffered in the flight to Egypt, but always with Jesus; but in this dolor she suffered at a distance from Jesus, without knowing where he was: "And the light of my eyes itself is not with me."§ Thus, with tears, she then exclaimed: Ah, the light of my eyes, my dear

* Fuerunt mihi lacrymæ meæ panes die ac nocte, dum dicitur mihi quotidie, ubi est Deus tuus? Psal. xli. 4.

† Illas noctes insomnes duxit in lacrymis, Deum deprecando, ut daret illi reperire filium.

‡ Indica, mihi ubi cubes, ubi pascas in meridie, ne vagari incipiam. Cant. i. 6.

§ Lumen oculorum meorum, et ipse non est mecum. Psal. xxvii. 11.

Jesus, is no more with me; he is far from me, I know not where he is! Origen says, that though the love which this holy mother bore her Son, she suffered more at this loss of Jesus than any martyr ever suffered at death.* Ah, how long were these three days for Mary! they appeared three ages. Very bitter days, for there was none to comfort her. And who, she exclaimed with Jeremias, who can console me if he who could console me is far from me? and therefore my eyes are not satisfied with weeping: "Therefore do I weep, and my eyes run down with water, because the comforter is far from me."† And with Tobias she repeated: "What manner of joy shall be to me who sit in darkness, and see not the light of heaven?"‡

Secondly.—Mary well understood the cause and end of the other dolors, namely, the redemption of the world, the divine will; but in this she did not know the cause of the absence of her Son. The sorrowful mother was grieved to find Jesus withdrawn from her, for her humility, says Lanspergius, made her consider herself unworthy to remain with him any longer, and attend upon him on earth, and have the care of such a treasure.§ And perhaps, she may have thought

* Vehementer doluit, quia vehementer amabat. Plus doluit de ejus amissione, quam aliquis martyr dolorem sentiat de animæ a corpore separatione. Hom. infr. Oct. Ep.

† Idcirco ego plorans, et oculus meus deducens aquas, quia longe est a me consolator meus. Thren. i. 16.

‡ Quale gaudium erit mihi, qui in tenebris sedeo, et lumen cœli non video. Tob. vi. 11.

§ Tristabatur ex humilitate, quia arbitrabatur se indignam cui tam pretiosus commissus esset thesaurus.

within herself, I have not served him as I ought. Perhaps I have been guilty of some neglect, and therefore he has left me. They sought him, lest he perchance had left them, as Origen has said.* Certainly there is no greater grief for a soul that loves God than the fear of having displeased him. And therefore Mary never complained in any other sorrow but this, lovingly expostulating with Jesus after she found him : "Son, why hast thou done so to us? Thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing."† By these words she did not wish to reprove Jesus, as the heretics blasphemously assert, but only to make known to him the grief she had experienced during his absence from her, on account of the love she bore him. It was not a rebuke, says blessed Denis the Carthusian, but a loving complaint : "Non erat increpatio, sed amorosa conquestio." Finally, this sword so cruelly pierced the heart of the Virgin, that the blessed Benvenuta, desiring one day to share the pain of the holy mother in this dolor, and praying her to obtain for her this grace, Mary appeared to her with the infant Jesus in her arms; but while Benvenuta was enjoying the sight of that most beautiful child, in one moment she was deprived of it. So great was her sorrow that she had recourse to Mary, to implore her pity that it should not make her die of grief. The holy Virgin ap-

* Quærebant eum, ne forte reliquisset eos. Ap. Corn. a Lap. in Luc. 2.

† Fili, quid fecisti nobis sis? Pater tuus et ego dolentes quærebamus te. Luc. ii. 48.

peared to her again three days after, and said to her: "Now learn, oh my daughter, that thy sorrow is but a small part of that which I suffered when I lost my Son."*

This sorrow of Mary ought, in the first place, to serve as a comfort to those souls who are desolate and do not enjoy the sweet presence they once enjoyed of their Lord. They may weep, but let them weep in peace, as Mary wept in the absence of her Son. Let them take courage, and not fear that on this account they have lost the divine favor, for God himself said to St. Theresa: "No one is lost without knowing it; and no one is deceived without wishing to be deceived." If the Lord departs from the sight of that soul who loves him, he does not therefore depart from the heart. He often hides himself that she may seek him with greater desire and love. But those who would find Jesus must seek him, not amid the delights and pleasures of the world, but amid crosses and mortifications, as Mary sought him: We sought thee sorrowing, as she said to her Son: "Dolentes quærebamus te." Learn from Mary to seek Jesus, says Origen "Disce a Maria quærere Jesum."

Moreover, in this world we should seek no other good than Jesus. Job was not unhappy when he lost all that he possessed on earth; riches, children, health, and honors, and even descended from a throne to a dunghill; but because he had God with him, even then he was happy.

* March. Diar. 30, Ott.

St. Augustine, speaking of him, says: He had lost all that God had given him, but he had God himself: "Perdiderat illa quæ dederat Deus, sed habebat ipsum Deum." Unhappy and truly wretched are those souls who have lost God. If Mary wept for the absence of her Son for three days, how ought sinners to weep who have lost divine grace, to whom God says: "You are not my people, and I will not be yours." * For sin does this, namely, it separates the soul from God: "Your iniquities have divided between you and your God." † Hence, if even sinners possess all the goods of earth and have lost God, every thing on earth becomes vanity and affliction to them, as Solomon confessed: "Behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit." ‡ But as St. Augustine says: The greatest misfortune of these poor blind souls is, that if they lose an ox, they do not fail to go in search of it; if they lose a sheep, they use all diligence to find it; if they lose a beast of burden, they cannot rest; but they lose the highest good, which is God, and yet they eat and drink, and take their rest. §

EXAMPLE.

We read in the Annual Letters of the Society of Jesus, that in India, a young man who was

* Vos non populus meus, et ego non ero vester. Os. i. 19.

† Peccata vestra diviserunt inter vos et Deum vestrum. Isa. lxix. 2.

‡ Ecce universa vanitas, et afflictio spiritus. Eccli. i. 14.

§ Perdit homo bovem, et post eum vadit: perdit ovem et sollicite eam quærit; perdit asinum, et non quiescit. Perdit homo Deum, et comedit, et bibit, et quiescit.

just leaving his apartment in order to commit sin, heard a voice saying: "Stop, where are you going? He turned round and saw an image, in relief, of the sorrowful Mary, who drew out the sword which was in her breast, and said to him: "Take this dagger and pierce my heart rather than wound my Son with this sin." At the sound of these words the youth prostrated himself on the ground, and with deep contrition, bursting into tears, he asked and obtained from God and the Virgin pardon of his sin.

PRAYER.

Oh blessed Virgin, why art thou afflicted, seeking thy lost Son? Is it because thou dost not know where he is? But dost thou not know that he is in thy heart? Dost thou not see that he is feeding among the lilies? Thou thyself hast said it: "My beloved to me and I to him who feedeth among the lilies."* These, thy humble, pure, and holy thoughts and affections, are all lilies, that invite the divine spouse to dwell with thee. Ah, Mary, dost thou sigh after Jesus, thou who lovest none but Jesus? Leave sighing to me and so many other sinners who do not love him, and who have lost him by offending him. My most amiable mother, if through my fault thy Son hast not yet returned to my soul, wilt thou obtain for me that I may find him. I know well that he allows himself to be found by all who seek him: The Lord is good

* Dilectus meus mihi, et ego illi, qui pascitur inter lilia. Cant. ii. 16.

to the soul that seeketh him: "Bonus est Dominus . . . animæ quærenti illum."* Make me to seek him as I ought to seek him. Thou art the gate through which all find Jesus; through thee I too hope to find him.

ON THE FOURTH DOLOR.

OF THE MEETING OF MARY WITH JESUS, WHEN HE WENT TO DEATH.

St. Bernardine says, that to form an idea of the grief of Mary in losing her Jesus by death, it is necessary to consider the love that this mother bore to this her Son. All mothers feel the sufferings of their children as their own. Hence the woman of Chanaan, when she prayed the Saviour to deliver her daughter from the devil that tormented her, said to him, that he should have pity on the mother rather than on the daughter: "Have mercy on me, oh Lord, thou son of David, my daughter is grievously troubled by a devil."† But what mother ever loved a child so much as Mary loved Jesus? He was her only child, reared amidst so many troubles and pains; a most amiable child, and most loving to his mother; a Son, who was at the same time her Son and her God; who came on earth to kindle in the hearts of all the holy fire of divine love, as he himself declared: "I

* Thren. iii. 25.

† Miserere mei, Domine fili David, filia mea male a dæmone vexatur. Matth. xv. 22.

am come to cast fire on the earth, and what will I but that it be kindled?"* Let us consider how he must have inflamed that pure heart of his holy mother, so free from every earthly affection. In a word, the blessed Virgin herself said to St. Bridget, that through love her heart and the heart of her Son was one: "Unum erat cor meum, et cor filii mei." That blending of handmaid and mother, of Son and God, kindled in the heart of Mary a fire composed of a thousand flames. But afterwards, at the time of the passion, this flame of love was changed into a sea of sorrow. Hence St. Bernardine says: All the sorrows of the world united would not be equal to the sorrow of the glorious Mary.† Yes, because this mother, as St. Lawrence Justinian writes: The more tenderly she loved, was the more deeply wounded.‡ The greater the tenderness with which she loved him, the greater was her grief at the sight of his sufferings, especially when she met her Son, after he had already been condemned, going to death at the place of punishment, bearing the cross. And this is the fourth sword of sorrow which to-day we have to consider.

The blessed Virgin revealed to St. Bridget that at the time when the passion of our Lord was drawing nigh, her eyes were always filled with

* Ignem veni mittere in terram, et quid volo, nisi ut accendatur. Luc. xii. 49.

† Omnes dolores mundi, si essent simul conjuncti, non essent tanti quantus dolor gloriosæ Mariæ. Tom. iii. 5, 45.

‡ Quanto dilexit tenerius, tanto est vulnerata profundius.

tears, as she thought of her beloved Son whom she was about to lose on this earth. Therefore, as she also said, a cold sweat covered her body from the fear that seized her at that prospect of approaching suffering.* Behold, the appointed day at length arrived, and Jesus came in tears to take leave of his mother before he went to death. St. Bonaventure, contemplating Mary on that night, says: Thou didst spend it without sleep, and while others slept, thou didst remain watching.† Morning having arrived the disciples of Jesus Christ came to this afflicted mother, one, to bring her this tidings, another, that; but all tidings of sorrow, for in her were then verified the words of Jeremias: "Weeping, she hath wept in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks; there is none to comfort her of all them that were dear to her."‡ One came to relate to her the cruel treatment of her Son in the house of Caiphas; another, the insults received by him from Herod. Finally, for I omit the rest to come to my point, St. John came and announced to Mary that the most unjust Pilate had already condemned him to death upon the cross. I say the most unjust, for, as St. Leo remarks, this unjust judge condemned him to death with the same lips with which he had pronounc-

* Imminente passione filii mei, lacrymæ erant in oculis meis, et sudor in corpore præ timore. L. 1, Rev. c. 10.

† Sine somno duxisti, et soporatis cæteris, vigil permansisti.

‡ Plorans ploravit in nocte, et lacrymæ in maxillis ejus; non est qui consoletur eam, ex omnibus charis ejus. Thren. i. 12.

ed him innocent.* Ah, sorrowful mother; said St. John to her, thy Son has already been condemned to death, he is already on his way, bearing himself his cross on his way to Calvary, as he afterwards related in his Gospel: "And bearing his own cross he went forth to that place which is called Calvary."† Come, if thou dost desire to see him, and bid him a last farewell in some of the streets through which he is to pass.

Mary goes with St. John, and she perceives by the blood with which the way was sprinkled, that her Son had already passed there. This she revealed to St. Bridget: "By the footsteps of my Son I traced his course, for along the way by which he had passed, the ground was sprinkled with blood."‡ St. Bonaventure imagines the afflicted mother taking a shorter way, and placing herself at the corner of the street to meet her afflicted Son as he passed by.§ This most afflicted mother met her most afflicted Son: Mœstissima mater mœstissimo filio occurrit, said St. Bernard. While Mary stopped in that place how much she must have heard said against her Son by the Jews who knew her, and perhaps also words in mockery of herself! Alas! what a commencement of sorrows was then before her eyes, when she saw the nails, the hammers, the

* Iisdem labiis mittit ad mortem quibus eum pronuntiaverunt innocentem.

† Et bajulans sibi crucem exivit in eum qui dicitur Calvariæ locum. Joan. xix. 17.

‡ Ex vestigiis filii mei cognoscebam incessum ejus; quæ enim præcedebat, apparebat terra infusa sanguine. L. 4, c. 77.

§ Med. 6.

cords, the fatal instruments of the death of her Son borne before him! And what a sword pierced her heart when she heard the trumpet proclaiming along the way the sentence pronounced against her Son! But behold, now, after the instruments, the trumpet, and the ministers of justice had passed, she raises her eyes and sees; she sees, oh God, a young man covered with blood and wounds from head to foot, with a crown of thorns on his head, and two heavy beams on his shoulders; she looks at him and hardly knows him, saying, then, with Isaias: "And we have seen him, and there was no sightliness."*Yes, for the wounds, the bruises, and clotted blood, made him look like a leper: "We have thought him, as it were, a leper;"† so that he could no longer be recognized. "And his look was, as it were, hidden and despised, whereupon we esteemed him not."‡ But at length love recognizes him, and as soon as she knows him, ah, what was then, as St. Peter of Alcantara says in his meditations, the love and fear of the heart of Mary! On the one hand, she desired to see him; on the other, she could not endure to look upon so pitiable a sight. But at length they look at each other. The Son wipes from his eyes the clotted blood, which prevented him from seeing(as was revealed to St. Bridget), and looks upon the mother; the mother looks upon the Son. Ah,

* Et vidimus eum, et non erat aspectus. Isa. liii. 2.

† Putavimus eum quasi leprosum. Isa. liii. 4.

‡ Et quasi absconditus vultus ejus, et despectus, unde nec reputavimus eum. Isa. liii. 3.

looks of sorrow, which pierced, as with so many arrows, those two holy and loving souls. When Margaret, the daughter of Sir Thomas More, met her father on his way to the scaffold, she could utter only two words, oh,father! oh, father! and fell fainting at his feet. At the sight of her Son going to Calvary, Mary fainted not; no, because it was not fitting that his mother should lose the use of her reason, as Father Suarez remarks, neither did she die, for God reserved her for a greater grief; but if she did not die, she suffered sorrow enough to cause her a thousand deaths.

The mother wished to embrace him, as St. Anselm says, but the officers of justice thrust her aside, loading her with insults, and urge onward our afflicted Lord. Mary follows. Ah, holy Virgin, where art thou going? To Calvary! And canst thou trust thyself to see him who is thy life hanging from a cross? And thy life shall be as it were hanging before thee: "Et erit vita tua quasi pendens ante te." * Ah! my mother, stop, says St. Lawrence Justinian, as if the Son himself had then spoken to her; where dost thou hasten? Where art thou going? If thou comest where I go, thou wilt be tortured with my sufferings, and I with thine.† But although the sight of her dying Jesus must cost her such cruel anguish, the loving

* Deut. xxviii. 66.

† Heu quo properas, quo venis mater! Cruciatu meo cruciaberis, et ego tuo.

Mary will not leave him. The Son goes before, and the mother follows, that she may be crucified with her Son, as William the Abbot says: The mother took up her cross, and followed him, that she might be crucified with him.* We even pity the wild beasts: "Ferarum etiam miseremur;" as St. John Chrysostom has said. If we should see a lioness following her whelp as he was led to death, even this wild beast would call forth our compassion. And shall we not feel compassion to see Mary following her immaculate Lamb, as they are leading him to death? Let us then pity her, and endeavor also ourselves to accompany her Son and herself, bearing with patience the cross which the Lord imposes upon us. Why did Jesus Christ, asks St. John Chrysostom, desire to be alone in his other sufferings, but in bearing the cross wished to be helped by the Cyrenean? And he answers: That thou mayest understand that the cross of Christ is not sufficient without thine.† The cross alone of Jesus is not enough to save us, if we do not bear with resignation also our own, even unto death.

EXAMPLE.

The Saviour appeared one day to sister Diomira, a nun, in Florence, and said to her: "Think of me, and love me, and I will think of thee, and love thee:" and at the same time he

* Tollebat et mater crucem suam, et sequebatur eum, crucifigenda cum ipso. In Cant. 7.

† Ut intelligas Christi crucem non sufficere sine tua.

presented her with a bunch of flowers and a cross, signifying to her by this, that the consolations of the saints on this earth are always to be accompanied by the cross. The cross unites souls to God. Blessed Jerome Emilian, when he was a soldier, and leading a very sinful life, was shut up by his enemies in a tower. There, feeling deeply his misfortune, and enlightened by God to amend his life, he had recourse to the most holy Mary, and then with the help of this divine mother, he began to live the life of a saint. By this he merited to see once in heaven the high place which God had prepared for him. He became founder of the order of Sommaschi, died a saint, and has been lately beatified by the holy Church.

PRAYER.

My sorrowful mother, by the merit of that grief which thou didst feel at seeing thy beloved Jesus led to death, obtain for me the grace also to bear with patience those crosses which God sends me. Happy me, if I also shall know how to accompany thee with my cross until death. Thou and Jesus, both innocent, have borne a heavy cross; and shall I a sinner, who have merited hell, refuse mine? Ah, immaculate Virgin, I hope that thou wilt help me to bear my crosses with patience. Amen.

ON THE FIFTH DOLOR.

OF THE DEATH OF JESUS.

And now we have to admire a new sort of martyrdom, a mother condemned to see an innocent son, whom she loved with all the affection of her heart, put to death before her eyes, by the most barbarous tortures. There stood by the cross of Jesus his mother: "Stabat autem juxta crucem mater ejus." There is nothing more to be said, says St. John, of the martyrdom of Mary: behold her at the foot of the cross, looking on her dying Son, and then see if there is grief like her grief. Let us stop then also to-day on Calvary, to consider this fifth sword that pierced the heart of Mary, namely, the death of Jesus.

As soon as our afflicted Redeemer had ascended the hill of Calvary, the executioners stripped him of his garments, and piercing his sacred hands and feet with nails, not sharp, but blunt: "Non acutis, sed obtusis;" as St. Bernard says,* and to torture him more, they fastened him to the cross. When they had crucified him, they planted the cross, and thus left him to die. The executioners abandon him, but Mary does not abandon him. She then draws nearer to the cross, in order to assist at his death. "I did not leave him," thus the blessed Virgin revealed to St.

* Serm. 2, de Pass.

Bridget, "and stood nearer to his cross. "* But what did it avail, oh Lady, says St. Bonaventure, to go to Calvary to witness there the death of this Son? Shame should have prevented thee, for his disgrace was also thine, because thou wast his mother; or, at least, the horror of such a crime as that of seeing a God crucified by his own creatures, should have prevented thee.† But the saint himself answers: Thy heart did not consider the horror, but the suffering: "Non considerabat cor tuum horrorem, sed dolorem." Ah, thy heart did not then care for its own sorrow, but for the suffering and death of thy dear Son; and therefore thou thyself didst wish to be near him, at least to compassionate him. Ah, true mother! says William the Abbot. loving mother! for not even the terror of death could separate thee from thy beloved Son.‡ But, oh God, what a spectacle of sorrow, to see this Son then in agony upon the cross, and under the cross this mother in agony, who was suffering all the pain that her Son was suffering! Behold the words in which Mary revealed to St. Bridget the pitiable state of her dying Son, as she saw him on the cross: "My dear Jesus was on the cross in grief and in agony; his eyes were sunken, half closed, and lifeless; the lips hanging, and the mouth open; the cheeks hollow, and

Ego non separabar ab eo, et stabam vicinior cruci ejus. L. 1, c. 6.

† Cur ivisti, O Domina, ad Calvariæ locum? cur te non retinuit pudor, horror facinoris?

‡ Plane mater, quæ nec in terrore mortis filium deserebat. Serm. 8, de Ass.

attached to the teeth; the face lengthened, the nose sharp, the countenance sad; the head had fallen upon his breast, the hair black with blood, the stomach collapsed, the arms and legs stiff, and the whole body covered with wounds and blood."*

Mary also suffered all these pains of Jesus. Every torture inflicted on the body of Jesus, says St. Jerome, was a wound in the heart of the mother.† Any one of us who should then have been on Mount Calvary, would have seen two altars, says St. John Chrysostom, on which two great sacrifices were consummating, one in the body of Jesus, the other in the heart of Mary. But rather would I see there, with St. Bonaventure, one altar only, namely, the cross alone of the Son, on which, with the victim, this divine Lamb, the mother also was sacrificed. Therefore the saint interrogates her in these words: Oh Lady, where art thou? Near the cross? Nay, on the cross, thou art crucified with thy Son.‡ St. Augustine also says the same thing: The cross and nails of the Son were also the cross and nails of the mother; Christ being crucified, the mother was also crucified.§ Yes, because, as St. Bernard says, love inflicted

* L. 1, Rev. c. 10, et l. 4, c. 70.

† Quot læsiones in corpore Christi, tot vulnera in corde matris. Ap. Bald. to. 1, p. 499.

‡ O Domina, ubi stas ? Numquid juxta crucem ? Imo in cruce cum filio cruciaris ? Ap. Bald. tom. 1, p. 452.

§ Crux et clavi filii fuerunt et matris; Christo crucifixo crucifigebatur et mater.

on the heart of Mary the same suffering that the nails caused in the body of Jesus.* Therefore, at the same time that the Son was sacrificing his body, the mother, as St. Bernardine says, was sacrificing her soul.†

Mothers fly from the presence of their dying children; but if a mother is ever obliged to witness the death of a child, she procures for him all possible relief; she arranges the bed, that his posture may be more easy; she administers refreshments to him; and thus the poor mother relieves her own sorrows. Ah, mother, the most afflicted of all mothers! oh Mary, it was decreed that thou shouldst be present at the death of Jesus, but it was not given to thee to afford him any relief. Mary heard her Son say: I thirst: "Sitio;" but it was not permitted her to give him a little water to quench his great thirst. She could only say to him, as St. Vincent Ferrer remarks: My Son, I have only the water of my tears: "Fili, non habeo nisi aquam lacrymarum."‡ She saw that her Son, suspended by three nails to that bed of sorrow, could find no rest. She wished to clasp him to her heart, that she might give him relief, or at least that he might expire in her arms, but she could not.§ She only saw that poor Son in a sea of sorrow,

* Quod in carne Christi agebant clavi, in Virginis mente affectus erga filium.

† Dum illi corpus, ista spiritum immolabat. To. 1, Serm. 31.

‡ Ap. Bald. p. 456.

§ Volebat eum amplecti sed manus frustra protensæ in se complexæ redibant. Ap. Bald. 463.

seeking one who could console him as he had predicted by the mouth of the prophet: "I have trodden the winepress alone; I looked about and there was none to help; I sought and there was none to give aid."* But who was there among men to console him, if all were his enemies? Even on the cross they cursed and mocked him on every side: "And they that passed by blasphemed him, wagging their heads."† Some said to him: "If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross."‡ Some exclaimed: "He saved others, himself he cannot save."§ Others said: "If he be the King of Israel, let him come down from the cross." ‖ The blessed Virgin herself said to St. Bridget: "I heard some call my Son a thief; I heard others call him an impostor; others said that no one deserved death more than he; and every word was to me a new sword of sorrow."¶

But what increased most the sorrows which Mary suffered through compassion for her Son, was to hear him complain on the cross that even the eternal Father had abandoned him: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"** Words which, as the divine mother herself said

* Torcular calcavi solus . . . Circumspexi, et non est auxiliator; quæsivi, et non fuit qui adjuvaret. Isa. lxiii. 3, 5.

† Prætereuntes autem blasphemabant eum moventes capita sua. Matt. xxvii. 39.

‡ Si filius Dei es, descende de cruce.

§ Alios salvos fecit, seipsum non potest salvum facere.

‖ Si rex Israel est, descendat nunc de cruce. Loc. cit.

¶ Rev. l. 4, c. 70.

** Deus, Deus meus, ut quid dereliquisti de? Matth. xxvii. 46

to St. Bridget, could never depart from her mind during her whole life.* Thus the afflicted mother saw her Jesus suffering on every side; she desired to comfort him, but could not. And what caused her the greatest sorrow was to see that, by her presence and her grief, she increased the sufferings of her Son. The sorrow itself, says St. Bernard, that filled the heart of Mary, increased the bitterness of sorrow in the heart of Jesus.† St. Bernard also says, that Jesus on the cross suffered more from compassion for his mother than from his own pains: he thus speaks in the name of the Virgin: I stood and looked upon him, and he looked upon me; and he suffered more for me than for himself.‡ The same saint also, speaking of Mary beside her dying Son, says, that she lived dying without being able to die: Near the cross stood his mother, speechless; living she died, dying she lived; neither could she die, because she was dead, being yet alive.§ Passino writes that Jesus Christ himself, speaking one day to the blessed Baptista Varana, of Camerino, said to her, that he was so afflicted on the cross at the sight of his mother in such anguish at his feet, that compassion for his mother

* Rev. l. 4, c. 70.

† Repleta matre, ad filium redundaret inundatio amaritudims. Hom. in Ev. Stabat.

‡ Stabam ego videns eum, ipse videns me, et plus dolebat de me quam de se. Ap. Simisc. Cons. 28.

§ Juxta crucem stabat mater, vox illi non erat; moriebatur vivens, vivebat moriens; nec mori poterat, quia vivens mortua erat. De. Lament. Virg.

caused him to die without consolation. So that the blessed Baptista, being enlightened to know this suffering of Jesus, exclaimed: Oh my Lord, tell me no more of this thy sorrow, for I cannot bear it.

Men were astonished, says Simon of Cassia, when they saw this mother then keep silence, without uttering a complaint in this great suffering.* But if the lips of Mary were silent, her heart was not so; for she did not cease offering to divine justice the life of her Son for our salvation. Therefore we know that by the merits of her dolors she co-operated with Christ in bringing us forth to the life of grace, and therefore we are children of her sorrows: Christ, says Lanspergius, wished her whom he had appointed for our mother to co-operate with him in our redemption; for she herself at the foot of the cross was to bring us forth as her children.† And if ever any consolation entered into that sea of bitterness, namely, the heart of Mary, it was this only one; namely, the knowledge that by means of her sorrows, she was bringing us to eternal salvation; as Jesus himself revealed to St. Bridget: "My mother Mary, on account of her compassion and charity, was made mother of all in heaven and on earth."‡ And, indeed, these were

* Stupebant omnes qui noverant hujus hominis matrem, quod etiam in tantæ angustiæ pressura silentium servabat.

† Voluit eam Christus cooperatricem nostræ redemptionis adstare, quam nobis constituerat dare matrem; debebat enim ipsa sub cruce nos parere filios. Hom. 44, de Pass. Dom.

‡ Maria mater mea, propter compassionem et charitatem facta est mater omnium in cœlis et in terra. L. 1, c. 31.

the last words with which Jesus took leave of her before his death; this was his last remembrance, leaving us to her for her children in the person of John, when he said to her: Woman, behold thy Son: "Mulier ecce filius tuus."* And from that time Mary began to perform for us this office of a good mother; for, as St. Peter Damian declares, the penitent thief, through the prayers of Mary, was then converted and saved: Therefore the good thief repented, because the blessed Virgin, standing between the cross of her Son and that of the thief, prayed her Son for him; thus rewarding, by this favor, his former service.† For as other authors also relate, this thief, in the journey to Egypt with the infant Jesus, showed them kindness; and this same office the blessed Virgin has ever continued, and still continues to perform.

EXAMPLE.

A young man in Perugia once promised the devil that if he would help him to commit a sinful act which he desired to do, he would give him his soul; and he gave him a writing to that effect, signed with his blood. The evil deed was committed, and the devil demanded the performance of the promise. He led the young man to a well, and threatened to take him body and soul

* Joan. xix. 26.

† Idcirco resipuit bonus latro, quia B. Virgo inter cruces filii et latronis posita, filium pro latrone deprecabatur; hoc suo beneficio, antiquum latronis obsequium recompensans. Ap. Salm. to. 1, tr. 47.

to hell if he would not cast himself into it. The wretched youth, thinking that it would be impossible for him to escape from his enemy, climbed the well-side in order to cast himself into it, but terrified at the thought of death, he said to the devil that he had not the courage to throw himself in, and that, if he wished to see him dead, he himself should thrust him in. The young man wore about his neck the scapular of the sorrowing Mary; and the devil said to him: "Take off that scapular, and I will thrust you in." But the youth, seeing the protection which the divine mother still gave him through that scapular, refused to take it off, and after a great deal of altercation, the devil departed in confusion. The sinner repented, and grateful to his sorrowful mother, went to thank her, and presented a picture of this case, as an offering, at her altar in the new church of Santa Maria, in Perugia.*

PRAYER.

Ah, mother, the most afflicted of all mothers, thy Son, then, is dead; thy Son so amiable, and who loved thee so much! Weep, for thou hast reason to weep. Who can ever console thee? Nothing can console thee but the thought that Jesus, by his death, hath conquered hell, hath opened paradise which was closed to men, and hath gained so many souls. From that throne of the cross he was to reign over so many hearts, which, conquered by his love, would serve him with

* Monum. Conv. Pec. ap. P. Sinisch. Sans. 16.

love. Do not disdain, oh my mother, to keep me near to weep with thee, for I have more reason than thou to weep for the offences that I have committed against thy Son. Ah, mother of mercy, I hope for pardon and my eternal salvation, first through the death of my Redeemer, and then through the merits of thy dolors. Amen.

ON THE SIXTH DOLOR.

THE PIERCING OF THE SIDE OF JESUS, AND HIS DESCENT FROM THE CROSS.

"Oh, all ye that pass by the way attend, and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow."* Devout souls, listen to what the sorrowful Mary says to you to-day: My beloved children, I do not wish you to console me; no, for my heart can never again be consoled on this earth after the death of my dear Jesus. If you wish to please me, this I ask of you, turn to me and see if there has ever been in the world a grief like mine, when I saw him who was all my love torn from me so cruelly. But, oh Lady, since thou dost not wish to be consoled, and hast such a thirst for suffering, I must say to thee that thy sorrows have not ended with the death of thy Son. To-day thou wilt be pierced by another sword of sorrow, when thou shalt see a cruel lance piercing the side of this thy Son, already dead, and shalt receive him in thy arms after he is taken from the cross. And now we

* O vos omnes qui transitis per viam, attendite et videte, si est dolor sicut dolor meus. Thren. i. 12.

are to consider to-day the sixth dolor which afflicted this sorrowful mother. Attend and weep. Hitherto the dolors of Mary tortured her one by one, but to-day they are all united to assail her.

To make known to a mother that her child is dead, is sufficient to kindle her whole soul with love for the lost one. Some persons, in order to lighten their grief, will remind mothers whose children have died, of the displeasure they had once caused them. But if I, oh my queen, should wish to lighten thy sorrow for the death of Jesus in this way, what displeasure has he ever caused thee, that I could recall to thy mind? Ah, no; he always loved thee, obeyed thee and respected thee. Now thou hast lost him, and who can describe thy sorrow? Do thou who hast felt it explain it. A devout author says, that when our Redeemer was dead, the heart of the great mother was first engaged in accompanying the most holy soul of the Son, and presenting it to the eternal father. I present thee, oh my God, Mary must then have said, the immaculate soul of thy and my Son, which has been obedient to thee even unto death: receive it, then, in thy arms. Thy justice is now satisfied, thy will accomplished; behold, the great sacrifice to thy eternal glory is consummated. And then turning to the lifeless members of her Jesus: Oh wounds, she said, oh loving wounds, I adore you, I rejoice with you, since through you salvation has been given to

the world. You shall remain open in the body of my Son, to be the refuge of those who will have recourse to you. Oh how many, through you, shall receive the pardon of their sins, and then through you shall be inflamed to love the Sovereign Good!

That the joy of the following Paschal Sabbath should not be disturbed, the Jews wished the body of Jesus to be taken down from the cross; but because they could not take down a criminal until he was dead, they came with iron mallets to break his legs, as they had already done to the two thieves crucified with him. And Mary, while she remains weeping at the death of her Son, sees those armed men coming towards her Jesus. At this sight she first trembled with fear, then she said : Ah, my Son is already dead, cease to maltreat him, and cease to torture me a poor mother longer. She implored them not to break his legs : "Oravit eos, ne frangerent crura," as St. Bonaventure writes. But while she is thus speaking, oh, God ! she sees a soldier with violence brandishing a spear, and piercing the side of Jesus : "One of the soldiers with a spear opened his side, and immediately there came out blood and water."* The cross shook at the stroke of the spear, and, as was revealed to St. Bridget, the heart of Jesus was divided : "Ita ut ambæ partes essent divisæ."† There came out blood and water, for only a few drops of blood remained, and those also the Saviour wished to

* Unus militum lancea latus ejus aperuit, et continuo exivit sanguis, et aqua. Joan. xix. 34.

† Rev. l. 2, c. 21.

shed, in order to show that he had no more blood to give us. The injury of that stroke was offered to Jesus, but the pain was inflicted on Mary: Christ, says the devout Lanspergius, shared with his mother the infliction of that wound, for he received the insult and his mother the pain.* The holy Fathers explain this to be the very sword predicted to the Virgin by St. Simeon ; a sword, not of iron, but of grief, which pierced through her blessed soul in the heart of Jesus, where it always dwelt. Thus, among others, St. Bernard says: The spear which opened his side passed through the soul of the Virgin, which could not be torn from the heart of Jesus.† And the divine mother herself revealed the same to St. Bridget, saying: "When the spear was drawn out, the point appeared red with blood; then I felt as if my heart were pierced when I saw the heart of my most dear Son pierced."‡ The angel told St. Bridget, that such were the sufferings of Mary, that she was saved from death only by the miraculous power of God.§ In her other dolors she at least had her Son to compassionate her; and now she had not even him to take pity on her.

The afflicted mother, still fearing that other

* Divisit Christus cum matre sua hujus vulneris pœnam, ut ipse injuriam acciperet, mater dolorem.

† Lancea quæ ipsius latus aperuit, animam Virginis pertransivit, quæ inde nequibat avelli. De Lament. Virg.

‡ Cum retraheretur hasta, apparuit cuspis rubea sanguine. Tunc mihi videbatur quod quasi cor meum perforaretur, cum vidissem cor filii mei charissimi perforatum. Rev. c. 10.

§ Non parvum miraculum a Deo factum est, quod B. Virgo tot doloribus sauciata spiritum non exhalarit.

injuries might be inflicted on her Son, entreats Joseph of Arimathea to obtain from Pilate the body of her Jesus, that at least after his death she may be able to guard it and protect it from injuries. Joseph went to Pilate, and made known to him the sorrow and the wish of this afflicted mother; and St. Anselm thinks that compassion for the mother softened the heart of Pilate, and moved him to grant her the body of the Saviour. And now Jesus is taken from the cross. Oh most holy Virgin, after thou with so great love hadst given thy Son to the world for our salvation, behold the world returns him to thee again! But oh, my God, how dost thou return him to me? said Mary to the world. My Son was white and ruddy: "Dilectus meus candidus et rubicundus:" but thou hast returned him to me blackened with bruises, and red, not with a ruddy color, but with the wounds thou hast inflicted upon him; he was beautiful, now there is no more beauty in him; he is all deformity. All were enamored with his aspect, now he excites horror in all who look upon him. Oh, how many swords, says St. Bonaventure, pierced the soul of this mother, when she received the body of her Son after it was taken from the cross: "O quot gladii animam matris pertransierunt!" Let us consider what anguish it would cause any mother to receive the lifeless body of a son! it was revealed to St. Bridget, that to take down the body of Jesus, three ladders were placed against the cross. Those holy disciples first

drew out the nails from the hands and feet, and according to Metaphrastes, gave them in charge to Mary. Then one supported the upper part of the body of Jesus, the other the lower, and thus took it down from the cross. Bernardine de Bustis describes the afflicted mother as raising herself, and extending her arms to meet her dear Son; she embraces him, and then sits down at the foot of the cross. She sees his mouth open, his eye shut, she examines the lacerated flesh, and those exposed bones; she takes off the crown, and sees the cruel injury made by those thorns, in that sacred head; she looks upon those pierced hands and feet, and says: Ah, my Son, to what has the love thou didst bear to men reduced thee! But what evil hast thou done to them, that they have treated thee so cruelly? Thou wast my Father, Bernardine de Bustis imagines her to say, my brother, my spouse, my delight, my glory, my all.* Oh, my Son, behold how I am afflicted, look upon me and console me; but thou dost look upon me no more. Speak, speak to me but one word, and console me; but thou dost speak no more, for thou art dead. Then turning to those barbarous instruments, she said: Oh cruel thorns, oh nails, oh merciless spear, how could you thus torture your Creator? But what thorns, what nails? Alas! sinners, she exclaimed, it is you who have thus cruelly treated my Son.

Thus Mary spoke and complained of us. But

* Tu mihi pater eras, tu frater, sponsus, meæ deliciæ, mea gloria, tu mihi omnia eras.

if now she were capable of suffering, what would she say? What grief would she feel to see that men after the death of her Son, continue to torment and crucify him by their sins? Let us no longer give pain to this sorrowful mother; and if we also have hither to grieved her by our sins, let us now do what she directs. She says to us: Return, ye transgressors, to the heart: "Redite, prævaricatores, ad cor."* Sinners, return to the wounded heart of my Jesus; return as penitents, for he will receive you. Flee from him to him, she continues to say with Guerric the Abbot; from the Judge to the Redeemer, from the tribunal to the cross.† The Virgin herself revealed to St. Bridget that she closed the eyes of her Son, when he was taken down from the cross, but she could not close his arms: "Ejus brachia flectere non potui." Jesus Christ giving us to understand by this, that he desired to remain with open arms to receive all penitent sinners who return to him. Oh world, continues Mary, behold, then, thy time is the time of lovers: "Et ecce, tempus tuum, tempus amantium."‡ Now that my Son, oh world, has died to save thee, this is no longer for thee a time of fear, but of love: a time to love him who has desired to suffer so much in order to show thee the love he bore thee. Therefore, says St. Bernard, is the heart of Jesus wounded that, through the

* Isa. xlvi.

† Ab ipso fuge ad ipsum, a judice ad redemptorem, a tribunali ad crucem.

‡ Ezech. xvi. 8.

visible wound, the invisible wound of love may be seen.* If then, concludes Mary, in the words of the Abbot of Celles, my Son had wished his side to be opened that he might give thee his heart,† it is right, oh man, that thou shouldst give him thy heart. And if you wish, oh children of Mary, to find a place in the heart of Jesus without fear of being cast out, go, says Ubertino of Casale, go with Mary, for she will obtain grace for you;‡ and in the following example we have a beautiful proof of this.

EXAMPLE.

The Disciple relates§ that there was once a poor sinner who, among other crimes, had killed his father and a brother, and therefore became a fugitive. Happening to hear one day during Lent, a sermon upon the divine mercy, he went to the preacher himself to make his confession. The confessor having heard his crimes, sent him to an altar of the sorrowful mother to pray that she might obtain for him compunction and pardon of his sins. The sinner obeyed, and began to pray, when behold, suddenly overpowered by contrition, he falls down dead. On the following day when the priest recommended to the people to pray for the deceased, a white dove appeared in the church and let fall a card at

* Propterea vulneratum est cor Christi, ut per vulnus visibile vulnus amoris invisibilis videatur. Serm. de pass. Dom.

† Præ nimio amore aperuit sibi latus, ut præberet cor suum.

‡ Filii hujus matris, ingredite um ipsa intra penetralia cordis Jesu

§ Promt. Ex. V. Miser.

the feet of the priest. He took it up, and found these words written on it: "The soul of the dead, when it left the body, immediately went to paradise; and do you continue to preach the infinite mercy of God."

PRAYER.

Oh afflicted Virgin! oh soul, great in virtues and great also in sorrows! for both arise from that great fire of love thou hast for God; thou whose heart can love nothing but God; ah mother, have pity on me, for I have not loved God, and I have so much offended him. Thy sorrows give me great confidence to hope for pardon. But this is not enough; I wish to love my Lord, and who can better obtain this for me than thou—thou who art the mother of fair love? Ah Mary, thou dost console all, comfort me also. Amen.

ON THE SEVENTH DOLOR.

THE BURIAL OF THE BODY OF JESUS.

When a mother is by the side of a suffering and dying child, she no doubt then feels and suffers all his pains; but when the afflicted child is really dead and about to be buried, and the sorrowful mother takes her last leave of him, oh God! the thought that she is to see him no more is a sorrow that exceeds all other sorrows. Behold,

the last sword of sorrow which we are to consider, when Mary, after being present at the death of her Son upon the cross, after having embraced his lifeless body, was finally to leave him in the sepulchre, never more to enjoy his beloved presence.

But that we may better understand this last dolor, let us return to Calvary, again to look upon the afflicted mother, who still holds, clasped in her arms, the lifeless body of her Son. Oh my Son, she seems then to continue to say in the words of Job, my Son, thou art changed to be cruel towards me: "Mutatus es mihi in crudelem."* Yes, for all thy beauty, grace, virtue, and loveliness, all the signs of special love thou hast shown me, the peculiar favors thou hast bestowed on me, are all changed into so many darts of sorrow, which the more they have inflamed my love for thee, so much the more cause me cruelly to feel the pain of having lost thee. Ah, my beloved Son, in losing thee I have lost all. Thus St. Bernard speaks in her name: Oh truly begotten of God, thou wast to me a father, a son, a spouse; thou wast my life! Now I am deprived of my father, my spouse, and my Son, for with my Son whom I have lost, I lose all things.†

Thus Mary, clinging to her Son, was dissolved in grief; but those holy disciples, fearing lest this poor mother would expire there through

* C. xxx. 21.

† O vere Dei nate, tu mihi pater, tu mihi filius, tu mihi sponsus, tu mihi anima eras! Nunc orbor patre, viduor sponso, desolor filio, uno perdito filio omnia perdo. De Lam. V. Mar.

agony, went to take the body of her Son from her arms, to bear it away for burial. Therefore, with reverential force they took him from her arms, and having embalmed him, wrapped him in a linen cloth already prepared, upon which our Lord wished to leave to the world his image impressed, as may be seen at the present day in Turin. And now they bear him to the sepulchre. The sorrowful funeral train sets forth; the disciples place him on their shoulders; hosts of angels from heaven accompany him; those holy women follow him; and the afflicted mother follows in their company her Son to the grave. When they had reached the appointed place, how gladly would Mary have buried herself there alive with her Son! "Oh how willingly," said the Virgin to St. Bridget, "would I have remained there alive with my Son, if it had been his will!"* But since this was not the divine will, the authors relate that she herself accompanied the sacred body of Jesus into the sepulchre, where, as Baronius narrates, they deposited the nails and the crown of thorns. In raising the stone to close the sepulchre, the disciples of the Saviour had to turn to the Virgin, and say to her: Now, oh Lady, we must close the sepulchre; have patience, look upon thy Son, and take leave of him for the last time. Then, oh my beloved Son, must the afflicted mother have said, then shall I see thee no more? Receive then, this last time that I look upon

* O quam libenter tunc posita fuissem viva cum filio meo, si fuisset voluntas ejus! Rev. l. 1.

thee, receive the last farewell from me thy dear mother, and receive my heart which I leave buried with thee. The Virgin, says St. Fulgentius, earnestly desired that her soul should be buried with the body of Christ.* And Mary herself made this revelation to St. Bridget: "I can truly say, that at the burial of my Son, one sepulchre contained as it were two hearts."†

Finally, they take the stone and close up in the holy sepulchre the body of Jesus, that great treasure, greater than any in heaven and on earth. And here let us remark, that Mary left her heart buried with Jesus, because Jesus was all her treasure: "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." ‡ And where shall we keep our hearts buried? With creatures? In the mire? And why not with Jesus, who, although he has ascended to heaven, has wished to remain, not dead but alive, in the most holy sacrament of the altar, precisely in order that he may have with him and possess our hearts? But let us return to Mary. Before quitting the sepulchre, according to St. Bonaventure, she blessed that sacred stone, saying: Oh happy stone, that doth now inclose that body which was contained nine months in my womb, I bless thee, and envy thee; I leave thee to guard my Son for me, who is my only good, my only love. And then turning to the eternal

* Animam cum corpore Christi contumulari Virgo vehementer exoptavit.

† Vere dicere possum quod sepulto filio meo quasi duo corda in uno sepulchro fuerunt. Rev. l. 2, c. 21.

‡ Ubi thesaurus vester est, ibi et cor vestrum erit. Luc. xii. 34.

Father, she said: Oh Father, to thee I recommend him, who is thy Son and mine; and thus bidding a last farewell to her Son, and to the sepulchre, she returned to her own house. This poor mother went away so afflicted and sad, according to St. Bernard, that she moved many to tears even against their will: "Multos etiam invitos ad lacrymas provocabat;" so that wherever she passed, all wept who met her: "Omnes plorabant qui obviabant ei," and could not restrain their tears. And he adds, that those holy disciples, and the women who accompanied her, mourned for her even more than for their Lord.*

St. Bonaventure says, that her two sisters covered her with a mourning cloak: The sisters of our Lady wrapped her in a veil as a widow, covering as it were her whole countenance.† And he also says, that passing, on her return, before the cross, still wet with the blood of her Jesus, she was the first to adore it: Oh holy cross, she exclaimed, I kiss thee and adore thee; for thou art no longer an infamous wood, but a throne of love, and an altar of mercy, consecrated by the blood of the divine Lamb, who has been sacrificed upon thee, for the salvation of the world. She then leaves the cross and returns to her house; there the afflicted mother casts her eyes around, and no longer sees her Jesus; but instead

* Super ipsam potius, quam super Dominum plangebant.

† Sorores Dominæ velaverunt eam tamquam viduam; cooperientes quasi totum vultum.

of the presence of her dear Son, all the memorials of his holy life and cruel death are before her. There she is reminded of the embraces she gave her Son in the stable of Bethlehem, of the conversations held with him for so many years in the shop of Nazareth: she is reminded of their mutual affection, of his loving looks, of the words of eternal life that came forth from that divine mouth. And then comes before her the fatal scene of that very day ; she sees those nails, those thorns, that lacerated flesh of her Son, those deep wounds, those uncovered bones, that open mouth, those closed eyes. Alas ! what a night of sorrow was that night for Mary ! The sorrowful mother turned to St. John, and said mournfully: Ah, John, where is thy master? Then she asked of Magdalen: Daughter, tell me where is thy beloved ? Oh God ! who has taken him from us? Mary weeps, and all those who are with her weep. And thou, oh my soul, dost thou not weep! Ah, turn to Mary, and say to her with St. Bonaventure : Let me, oh my Lady, let me weep ; thou art innocent, I am guilty.* At least entreat her to permit thee to weep with her: "Fac ut tecum lugeam." She weeps for love, and thou dost weep through sorrow for thy sins. And thus weeping, thou mayest have the happy lot of him of whom we read in the following example.

* Sine, Domina mea, sine me flere; tu innocens es, ego sum reus

EXAMPLE.

Father Engelgrave relates,* that a certain religious was so tormented by scruples, that sometimes he was almost driven to despair, but having great devotion to Mary, the mother of sorsows, he had recourse to her in the agony of his spirit, and was much comforted by contemplating her dolors. Death came, and the devil tormented him more than ever with scruples, and tempted him to despair. When, behold our merciful mother, seeing her poor son so afflicted, appeared to him, and said to him: "And why, oh my son, art thou so overcome with sorrow, thou who hast so often consoled me by thy compassion for my sorrows?† Be comforted," she said to him; "Jesus sends me to thee to console thee; be comforted, rejoice, and come with me to paradise." And at these words the devout religious tranquilly expired, full of consolation and confidence.

PRAYER.

My afflicted mother, I will not leave thee alone to weep; no, I wish to keep thee company with my tears. This grace I ask of thee to-day: obtain for me a continual remembrance of the passion of Jesus, and of thine also, and a tender devotion to them, that all the remaining days of my life may be spent in weeping for thy sorrows, oh my mother, and for those of my Redeemer.

* Dom infra oct Nat. s. 2.

† Et tu, fili mi, cur mœrore conficeris, qui in mœrore meo toties me consolatus es?

I hope that these dolors will give me the confidence and strength not to despair at the hour of my death, at the sight of the offences I have committed against my Lord. By these must I obtain pardon, perseverance, paradise, where I hope to rejoice with thee, and sing the infinite mercy of my God through all eternity: thus I hope, thus may it be. Amen, amen.

Whoever wishes to practise the devotion of reciting the chaplet of the dolors of Mary, will find it at the end of the book. I composed this many years since, and insert it anew here for the convenience of the servants of Mary, whom I pray in their charity to recommend me to her when they meditate upon her dolors.

Oh Lady, who dost ravish the heart of men with thy sweetness, hast thou not ravished mine? Oh, ravisher of hearts, when wilt thou restore to me my heart? Do w tn it as with thine own, and place it in the side of thy Son. Then I shall possess what I hope for, because thou art our hope.*

OF THE VIRTUES OF THE MOST HOLY MARY.

St. Augustine says, that in order to obtain more certainly and abundantly the favors of the

* O Domina, quæ rapis corda hominum dulcore, nonne cor meum rapuisti? O raptrix cordium, quando mihi restitues cor meum? Guberna illud cum tuo, et in latere filii colloca. Tunc possidebo quod spero, quia tu es spes nostra. S. Bernard. Med. in Salv. Reg. ap. s. Bon. Stim. c. 19, part. 3.

saints, it is necessary to imitate them, for when they see us practising the virtues which they practised, then they are more moved to pray for us. The queen of saints, and our first advocate, Mary, after she has rescued a soul from the grasp of Lucifer, and has united her to God, wishes her to begin to imitate her example, otherwise she will not be able to enrich her, as she would wish, with her graces, seeing her so opposed to her in conduct. Therefore Mary calls those blessed who diligently imitate her life: "Now, therefore, children, hear me; blessed are they that keep my ways."* He who loves, is like, or seeks to make himself like, the person beloved, according to the celebrated proverb: Love either finds or makes like: "Amor aut pares invenit aut facit." Hence St. Jerome tells us, that if we love Mary, we must seek to imitate her, for this is the greatest honor we can pay her.† Richard says, those are and may call themselves true children of Mary, who strive to imitate her life: "Filii Mariæ imitatores ejus." Let the child then endeavor, concludes St. Bernard, to imitate the mother, if he desires her favor; for when Mary sees that he honors her as a mother she will treat and favor him as a child.

Although there is little recorded in the Gospels of the virtues of Mary in particular, yet, when they tell us that she was full of grace, it

* Nunc, ergo filii, audite me; beati qui custodiunt vias meas. Prov. viii. 33.

† Dilectissimi Mariam colite quam amatis, quia tunc vere amatis si imitari volueritis quam amatis. S. Hier. Serm. de Ass. ap. Lohn.

is given us to understand that she had all the virtues, and all in the heroic degree. So much so, that, as St. Thomas says, where as the other saints have excelled, each in some one particular virtue, the blessed Virgin has excelled in all, and in all the virtues has been given us for an example.* And St. Ambrose also says: Such was Mary, that her life alone is the example for all.† And he afterwards adds: Let the virginity and life of Mary be to you as an image, in which the form of virtue shines forth. From thence obtain the model of your life . . . what you should correct, what avoid, what retain.‡ And because, as the holy Fathers teach, humility is the foundation of all the virtues, let us in the first place consider how great was the humility of the mother of God.

SECTION I.

OF THE HUMILITY OF MARY.

Humility, says St. Bernard, is the foundation and guardian of the virtues;§ and with reason, for without humility a soul can possess no other virtue. Let her possess all the virtues, they

* Alii sanctorum specialia opera exercuerunt; alius fuit castus, alius humilis, alius misericors; sed B. Virgo datur in exemplum omnium virtutum. Opusc. 8.

† Talis fuit Maria ut ejus unius vitæ omnium disciplina sit. L. 2, de Virg.

‡ Sit vobis tanquam in imagine descripta virginitas vitaque Mariæ, in qua refulget forma virtutis. Hinc sumatis exempla vivendi . . . quid corrigere, quid fugere, qui tenere debeatis. Loc. cit.

§ Humilitas est fundamentum custosque virtutem.

will all depart when humility departs. On the other hand, said St. Francis of Sales, in a letter to St. Jane de Chantal, God so loves humility that he instantly hastens to the soul in which he sees it.* This virtue, so lovely and so necessary, was unknown in the world; but the Son of God himself came on earth to teach it by his example, and he desired that in this we should especially strive to imitate him: "Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart." † And Mary, as she was the first and most perfect disciple of Jesus Christ in all the virtues, was so in that of humility, by which she merited to be exalted above all creatures. It was revealed to St. Matilda that the first virtue which the blessed mother especially practised from childhood, was humility.‡

The first act of humility of heart is to have an humble opinion of ourselves; and Mary always thought so lowly of herself, as was revealed to the same St. Matilda, that although she saw so many more graces bestowed upon her than upon others, she preferred all others before herself.§ Rupert the Abbot, explaining that passage, "Thou hast wounded my heart, my sister, my spouse . . . . with one hair of thy neck," ‖ says,

* Vit. l. 6, c. 2, s. 11.

† Et discite a me, quia mitis sum, et humilis corde. Matth. xi. 29.

‡ Prima virtus in qua Virgo nata, et infans se singulariter exercuit, fuit humilitas.

§ Ita modeste de se sentiebat, ut cum tot gratias haberet, nulli se prætulit.

‖ Vulnerasti cor meum, soror mea sponsa . . . in uno crine colli tui. Cant. iv. 9.

that this hair of the neck of the spouse was precisely that humble opinion which Mary had of herself, with which she wounded the heart of God.* Not that the holy Virgin esteemed herself a sinner, for humility is truth, as St. Theresa says, and Mary knew that she had never offended God; nor that she did not confess having received greater graces from God than any other creature, for an humble heart always acknowledges the special favors of the Lord, that it may humble itself the more; but the divine mother, by the greater light she had to see the infinite greatness and goodness of her God, saw still more her own littleness, and therefore more than all others did she humiliate herself, and say with the spouse of the Canticles: "Do not consider that I am brown because the sun hath altered my color."† Approaching him, I find myself black, as St. Bernard explains it: "Appropinquans illi me nigram invenio."‡ Yes, adds St. Bernardine, for the Virgin had always present before her eyes the divine majesty, and her own nothingness.§ As a beggar, when she is clothed with a costly garment which has been given her, is not made proud by it, but humbles herself more before the giver, because she is re-

* In uno crine, idest in nimia humilitate cordis tui. Iste est crinis colli, humilis cogitatus . . . . Quid uno crine gracilius ? In d. l. Cant. 4.

† Nolite, me considerare quod fusca sim, quia decoloravit me sol. Cant. i. 6.

‡ Appropinquans illi me nigram invenio.

§ Virgo continue habebat actualem relationem ad divinam majestatem, et ad sui nihilitatem.

minded then more of her poverty; thus, Mary, the more she saw herself enriched, the more humble she became, remembering that all was the gift of God; whence she herself said to St. Elizabeth, a Benedictine nun: "Know for certain that I esteemed myself most abject, and unworthy of the grace of God." * And therefore, says St. Bernardine, no creature in the world has been more exalted, because no creature has ever humbled herself more than Mary.†

Moreover, it is an act of humility to conceal the gifts of heaven. Mary wished to conceal from St. Joseph the grace of having been made the mother of God, although it seemed necessary to make it known to him, in order, at least, to remove from the mind of her poor spouse the suspicions he might have of her virtue, when he saw her pregnant; or at least his perplexity, for in fact St. Joseph, on the one side, unwilling to doubt the chastity of Mary, and, on the other, ignorant of the mystery, in order to free himself from perplexity, was minded to put her away privately: "Voluit occulte dimittere eam."‡ And if the angel had not revealed to him that his spouse was pregnant by the operation of the Holy Spirit, he would really have left her. Moreover, an humble soul also refuses praise, and gives it all to God. Behold, Mary is dis-

* Pro firmo scias, quod me reputabam vilissimam et gratis Dei indignam. Ap. S. Bon. de Vit. Christ.

† Sicut nulla post filium Dei creatura tantum ascendit in gratiæ dignitatem, sic nec tantum descendit in abyssum humilitatis. To. 2, Serm. 51, c. 3.

‡ Matth. i. 19.

turbed at hearing herself praised by St. Gabriel. And when St. Elizabeth said to her, "Blessed art thou among women . . . and whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me . . . .Blessed art thou that hast believed, &c.,"* Mary, referring all these praises to God, answered with that humble Canticle: My soul doth magnify the Lord: "Magnificat anima mea Dominum," as if she had said: You praise me, oh Elizabeth, but I praise the Lord, to whom alone honor is due; you wonder that I come to you, and I wonder at the divine goodness in which alone my spirit exults. And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour: "Et exultavit spiritus meus in Deo salutari meo." You praise me because I have believed; I praise my God, because he has wished to exalt my nothingness; because he hath regarded the humility of his handmaid: "Quia respexit humilitatem ancillæ suæ." Hence Mary said to St. Bridget: "Why did I humble myself so far, or why have I merited so much grace, unless because I thought and knew that of and from myself I was nothing, and had nothing? therefore I would have no praise for myself, but only for the Giver and Creator."† Wherefore, speaking of the humility of Mary, St. Augustine says: Oh truly blessed

* Benedicta tu in mulieres . . . Et unde hoc mihi ut veniat mater Domini mei ad me? Et beata quæ credidisti, &c. Luc. i. 42, 43, 44.

† Ubi quid enim ego me tantum humiliabam, aut promerui tantam gratiam, nisi quia cogitavi et scivi nihil a me esse vel habere. Ideo nolui laudem meam, sed solum datoris et creatoris. Rev. l. 2, c. 23.

humility, which has brought forth God to men, opened paradise, and liberated souls from hell!*

It is also a part of humility to save others; and Mary did not refuse to go and serve Elizabeth for three months. Wherefore St. Bernard has said: Elizabeth wondered that Mary should come to visit her, but she should wonder still more that she did not come to be ministered unto, but to minister.† The humble retire and choose the lowest place; and therefore, as St. Bernard remarks, Mary, when her Son was preaching in a certain house, as St. Matthew relates,‡ wished to speak with him, but would not enter the house unbidden.§ Therefore, when she was in the "upper room" with the apostles, she wished to take the lowest place, as St. Luke has related: "All these were persevering with one mind in prayer, with the woman and Mary the mother of Jesus."‖ Not that St. Luke did not know the merit of the divine mother, on account of which he should have given her the first place; but because she had taken the lowest, after the apostles and the other women, therefore St. Luke described all, as a certain author remarks,

* O vere beata humilitas, quæ Deum hominibus peperit, paradisum aperuit, et animas ab inferis liberavit. Serm. 35, de Sanctis.

† Venisse Mariam mirabatur Elisabeth, sed magis miretur quod ipsa non ministrari venerit, sed ministrare. Serm. de Nat. Virg.

‡ C. 12.

§ Foris stabat, nec materna auctoritate sermonem interrupit, nec in domum intravit ubi filius loquebatur.

‖ Hi omnes erant perseverantes unanimitur in oratione cum mulieribus, et Maria matre Jesu. Act. i. 14.

just in the order of their places. Hence St. Bernard says: Justly has the last become first, who, when she was first of all, became last.* Finally, the humble love contempt; therefore we do not find that Mary appeared in Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, when her Son was received with so much honor by the people; but, on the other hand, at the time of the death of her Son, she did not shrink from appearing in public on Calvary, through fear of the disgrace of being known as the mother of one who was condemned as a criminal to die by an infamous death. Therefore she said to St Bridget: "What more contemptible than to be called a fool, to be in want of all things, to believe one's self the most unworthy of all? Such, oh daughter, was my humility, this was my joy, this my entire will, with which I thought of nothing but to please my Son."†

The venerable sister Paula of Foligno was given to understand in an ecstasy how great was the humility of the holy Virgin. In relating what she had seen to her confessor, she said, scarcely able to utter the words through astonishment: "Oh the humility of the blessed Virgin! Oh father! oh the humility of our blessed Lady! In the world there is no humility, not even

* Merito facta novissima prima, quæ cum prima esset omnium, de novissimam faciebat. Serm. Sup. Si. Mar.

† Quid contemtibilius quam vocari fatua, omnibus indigere, omnibus indigniorem se credere? Talis O filia, fuit humilitas mei hoc gaudium meum, hæc voluntas tota, qua nulli nisi filio mendlacare cogitabam.

the lowest degree of humility, to be compared with the humility of Mary." And our Lord, at another time, showed St. Bridget two females, one all pomp and vanity: "This one," he said, "is Pride; but the other whom you see with her head bent down, respectful to all, having God alone in her mind, and having no esteem for herself, is Humility, and is called Mary."* By this God wished to make known to us that his blessed mother was so humble that she was humility itself.

It is not to be doubted, as St. Gregory of Nyssa says, that for our nature, corrupted by sin, there is perhaps no virtue more difficult to practise than humility. But there is no escape; we can never be true children of Mary if we are not humble. If, says St. Bernard, you cannot imitate the virginity, imitate the humility of the humble Virgin.† She abhors the proud, she invites none to come to her but the humble: Whosoever is a little one, let him come to me: "Si quis est parvulus, veniat ad me." Mary, says Richard, protects us under the mantle of humility: "Maria protegit nos sub pallio humilitatis." The mother of God herself explained this to St. Bridget, saying: "Come, then, oh my daughters, and hide thyself under my mantle; this mantle is my humility."‡ And she then added, that the con-

* Rev. l. 1, c. 29.

† Si non potes virginitatem, humilis, imitare humilitatem Virginis. Ho. 1, Sup. Miss.

‡ Ergo et tu, filia mea veni, et absconde te sub mantello meo; hic mantellus humilitas mea est.

templation of her humility was a good mantle that keeps us warm ; but, as she afterwards said: "The mantle only warms him who wears it, not only in thought but in fact ; thus my humility does not profit unless every one strives to imitate it. Therefore, my daughter," she concludes, "clothe thyself with this humility."* Oh, how dear to Mary is the humble soul! St. Bernard writes: The Virgin recognizes and loves those who love her, and she is near to all who invoke her, especially to those whom she sees like herself in chastity and humility.† Wherefore the saint then exhorts all those who love Mary, to be humble : Emulate this virtue if you love Mary.‡ Marino, or Martino d'Alberto, of the Society of Jesus, through love of the Virgin, was accustomed to sweep the house and collect the filth. The divine mother once appeared to him, as Father Nierembergh relates in his Life, and as if thanking him, said : "How dear to me is this humble action done for love of me!" Then, oh my queen, I shall never be a true child of thine, if I am not humble. But do you not see that my sins, after having rendered me ungrateful to my Lord, have also made me proud ? Oh, my mother, cure me; by thy merits obtain for me that I may be humble, and thus become a child of thine. Amen.

* Nec humilitas mea proficit, nisi unusquisque studuerit eam imitari Ergo, filia mea, induere hac humilitate.

† Agnoscit Virgo et diligit diligentes se, et prope est invocantibus se; præsertim iis quos videt conformes sibi factos in castitate et humilitate. In Salv. Reg.

‡ Æmulamini hanc virtutem, si Mariam diligitis. Loc. cit.

SECTION II.

OF THE CHARITY OF MARY TOWARDS GOD.

St. ANSELM says, that where there is the greatest purity, there is the greatest charity: "Ubi major puritas, ibi major charitas." The purer and more emptied of self is a heart, the more it will be filled with charity towards God. Most holy Mary, because she was all humility, and entirely emptied of self, was entirely filled with the divine love, so that she surpassed all men and all angels in love to God, as St. Bernardine teaches.* Therefore St. Francis of Sales has justly called her: The queen of love. The Lord indeed has given to men the precept to love him with their whole heart: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart;" † but, as St. Thomas declares, this precept will never be perfectly fulfilled by men on this earth, but in heaven.‡ And here the blessed Albertus Magnus remarks, that in a certain sense, it would be unbecoming for God to give a commandment which none could perfectly fulfil, if

* Superat omnium creaturarum amores in filium suum.

† Diliges Dominum Deum tuum ex toto corde tuo. Matt. xxii. 37.

‡ Plene et perfecte in patria implebitur hoc præceptum; in via autem impletur, sed imperfecte. 2, 2. q. 24, vid. a. 6, 8.

the divine mother had not perfectly fulfilled it. These are the words of Albertus: Either some one fulfils this precept or no one; if any one, it is the most blessed Virgin.* And this is confirmed by Richard of St. Victor, who says: The mother of our Emmanuel was perfect in all virtues. Who has ever fulfilled as she did that first commandment: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart?" In her the divine love was so ardent, that there could be no defect of any kind in her.† Divine love, says St. Bernard, so penetrated and pervaded the soul of Mary, that no part was left untouched by it, so that she loved with her whole heart, her whole soul, and her whole strength, and was full of grace.‡ Wherefore Mary might well have said: My beloved has given himself wholly to me, and I have given myself wholly to him: My beloved to me, and I to him: "Dilectus meus mihi, et ego illi."§ Ah, says Richard, well might even the seraphim descend from

* Aut aliquis implet hoc preceptum, aut nullus; si aliquis, ergo beatissima Virgo. Super. Miss. c. 76.

† Emmanuelis nostri puerpera in omni fuit virtutum consummatione perfecta. Quis illud primum mandatum sic unquam implevit: Diliges Dominum Deum tuum ex toto corde tuo? In ea divinus amor adeo concaluit, ut qualiscumque defectus in eam incidere non posset. L. 2, de Em. c. 26.

‡ Amor Christi Mariæ animam non modo confixit, sed etiam pertransivit; ut nullam in pectore virginali particulam vacuam relinqueret, sed toto corde, tota anima, tota virtute diligeret et esset gratia plena. Serm. 29, in Cant.

§ Cant. ii. 10.

heaven to learn from the heart of the Virgin how to love God.*

God, who is love: "Deus charitas est,"† came on earth to kindle in all men the flames of his holy love; but he inflamed no heart so much as the heart of his mother, who, being entirely pure from every earthly affection, was perfectly ready to be enkindled by this blessed flame. Thus St. Jerome teaches.‡ Hence the heart of Mary became all fire and flames, as we read of her in the sacred Canticles: The lamps thereof are fire and flames: "Lampades ejus, lampades ignis, atque flammarum."§ Fire burning within, through love, as St. Anselm explains,‖ and flames shining forth upon all, by the practice of virtue. Mary, therefore, when she bore Jesus in her arms, might indeed have called herself: Fire carrying fire: "Ignis gestans ignem," more properly than a certain woman who was carrying fire in her hand was so called by Hippocrates. Yes, for St. Ildephonsus said: As fire heats iron, the Holy Spirit so wholly inflamed Mary that nothing was seen in her but the flame of the Holy Ghost, nothing was felt but the fire of the love of God.¶ St. Thomas of Villanova says

* Seraphim e cœlo descendere poterant, ut amorem discerent in corde virginis.

† Joan. iv. 16.

‡ Totam eam incanduerat divinus amor, ita ut nihil esset mundanum quod ejus violaret affectum, sed ardor continuus, et ebrietas profusi amoris. Hier. aut. Sofron. Serm. de Ass.

§ Cant. viii. 6. ‖ Ap. a Lap.

¶ Mariam, velut ignis ferrum, Spiritus Sanctus totam ignivit; ita ut in ea Spiritus Sancti flamma tantum videatur, nec sentiatur nisi tantum ignis amoris Dei. De. Ass. Or. 1.

that the bush which Moses saw entirely in flames without being consumed, was really a symbol of the heart of the Virgin. Wherefore with reason, as St. Bernard says, was she seen by St. John clothed with the sun: And there appeared a great wonder in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun: "Et signum apparuit in cœlo, mulier amicta sole."* For, says the saint, she was so united to God by love that it seems as if no creature could be more united to him. Mary, then, is justly described as clothed with the sun, for she has penetrated to an incredible depth the abyss of divine wisdom, so that, as far as it is permitted to a creature not personally united with God, she appears immersed in that inaccessible light.†

Therefore St. Bonaventure asserts, that the holy Virgin was never tempted by the spirits of hell: For as flies, he says, are driven away by a great fire, so from the heart of Mary, which was one flame of love, the devils fled, and did not even dare to approach her.‡ And Richard also says: The Virgin was terrible to the princes of darkness, so that they did not presume to approach and tempt her, for the flame of charity

* Apoc. xii. 1.

† Jure ergo Maria sole perhibetur amicta, quæ profundissimam divinæ sapientiæ, ultra quam credi valeat, penetravit abyssum: ut quantum sine personali unione creaturæ conditio patitur, luci illi inaccessibili videatur immersa. Serm. in Sign Magn.

‡ Sicut magnus ignis effugat muscas, sic a sua inflammata charitate dæmones pellebantur, quod non ausi sint illi appropinquare. To. 2, Serm. 61, a. 3.

deterred them.* Mary herself revealed to St. Bridget, that in this world she had no other thought, no other desire, no other joy, than God: I thought of nothing but God; nothing pleased me but God: "Nihil nisi Deum cogitabam, nulla mihi nisi Deus placuerunt." So that her blessed soul being, as it were, on this earth in a continual contemplation of God, the acts of love she made were innumerable; as Father Suarez has declared: The acts of perfect love which the blessed Virgin made in this life were innumerable, for she passed almost her whole life in contemplation, and was very frequently repeating an act of love.† But Bernard de Bustis pleases me more when he says, that Mary did not so much repeat the acts of love in order, as other saints do, but, by a singular privilege, always actually loved God with one continued act.‡ Like the royal eagle she kept her eyes always fixed upon the divine Sun, so that, as St. Peter Damian says, neither did the actions of life prevent her from loving, nor love prevent her from acting.§ Thus, says St. Germanus, Mary

* Virgo principibus tenebrarum terribilis fuit, ut ad eam accedere, eamque tentare non præsumserint, deterrebat eos flamma charitatis. P. c. 26, in Cant.

† Actus perfectæ charitatis, quos B. Virgo habuit in hac vita, innumerabiles fuerunt, quæ fere totam vitam in contemplatione transegit, et tunc amoris actum frequentissime repetebat. To. 2, in 3, p. D. 18, S. 4.

‡ Tamen ipsa gloriosissima Virgo de privilegio singulari continue et semper Deum amabat actualiter. P. 2, Serm. 4, de Nat. Virg.

§ Adeo ut nec actio contemplationem minueret, et contemplatio nec desereret actionem. Serm. 1, de Nat. Virg.

was prefigured by the altar of propitiation on which the fire was never extinguished by day or by night.

Neither did sleep interrupt the love of Mary for her God. For if such a privilege was given to our first parents in the state of innocence, as St. Augustine asserts, saying: Their dreams when sleeping were as happy as their life when waking: "Tam felicia erant somnia dormientium, quam vita vigilantium," * it certainly could not be denied to the divine mother, as Suarez and Rupert the Abbot believe, with St. Bernardine and St. Ambrose, who has written concerning Mary: While her body rested, her soul watched: "Cum quiesceret corpus, vigilaret anima." † Thus were verified in her the words of the wise man: Her lamp shall not be put out in the night: "Non extinguetur in nocte lucerna ejus." ‡ Yes, for while her blessed body, with a light sleep, took its needed rest, her soul, says St. Bernardine, freely rose to God, so at that time her contemplation was more perfect than is that of any other person when awake.§ Therefore could she well say with the spouse in the Canticles: I sleep and my heart watcheth: "Ego dormio et cor meum vigilat." ‖ Happy in sleep as in waking: "Tam felix dormiendo, quam vigilando," as Suarez says. In a word, St. Ber-

* L. 5, in Jul. c. 9. † L. 2, de Virg. ‡ Prov. xxxi. 18.

§ Anima ejus libere tunc tendebat in Deum; unde illo tempore erat perfectior contemplatrix, quam unquam fuerit alius dum vigilavit.

‖ Cant. v. 2.

nardine asserts, that Mary, while she lived on earth, was continually loving God: "Mens Virginis in ardore dilectionis continue tenebatur."* And he adds further, that she never did anything that she did not know was pleasing to God, and that she loved him as much as she knew he ought to be loved.† Hence, according to blessed Albertus Magnus, it may be said that Mary was filled with so great charity that a greater was not possible in any pure creature on this earth.‡ For this reason St. Thomas of Villanova has said, that the Virgin, by her ardent charity, was made so beautiful and so enamoured her God, that captivated as it were, by love of her, he descended into her womb to become man.§ Wherefore St. Bernardine exclaims: Behold a Virgin who by her virtue has wounded and taken captive the heart of God.‖

But since Mary loves her God so much, she certainly requires from her servants nothing else so much as that they should love God as

* To. 2, Serm. 51, a. 3, c. 3.

† Nihil unquam elegit nisi quod divina sapientia demonstrabat; tantumque dilexit Deum, quantum a se diligendum existimabat. Loc. cit.

‡ Credimus etiam sine præjudicio melioris sententiæ, B. Virginem in conceptione filii Dei charitatem talem accepisse qualis et quanta percipi poterat a pura creatura in statu viæ. L. de Laud. Virg c. 96.

§ Hæc Virgo sua pulchritudine Deum a cœlis allexit, qui amore filius captus est, et humanitatis nostræ nexibus irretitus. Conc. 5, in Nat. Dom.

‖ O virtus Virginis matris! Una puella vulneravit et rapuit divinum cor! To. 2, Serm. 61, a. 1, c. 4.

much as they can. And precisely this she said to the blessed Angela de Foligno one day after communion : "Angela, may you be blessed by my Son; seek to love him as much as you can." And the blessed Virgin herself said to St. Bridget: Daughter, if you wish to bind me to you, love my Son: "Si vis me tecum devincire, ama filium meum." Mary desires nothing more than to see her beloved, who is God, loved by all. Novarino asks why the holy Virgin, with the spouse of the Canticles, begged the angels to make known to her Lord the great love she bore him, saying : "I adjure you, oh daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, that you tell him that I languish with love."* Did not God know how much she loved him ? Why does she desire to show the wound to her beloved who gave the wound ? "Cur vulnus ostendi quærit dilecto qui vulnus fecit ?" The same author answers, that the divine mother did not wish by this to make known her love to God, but to us ; that, as she was wounded, she might be able to wound us also with divine love : "Ut vulnerata vulneret."† And because she was wholly inflamed with the love of God, she inflames all those who love and approach her, and renders them like herself.‡ For this reason St. Catharine of Sienna called Mary : The bearer of the flame of divine love

* Adjuro vos, filiæ Jerusalem, si inveneritis dilectum meum, ut nuncietis ei, quia amore langueo. Cant. v. 8.

† L. 4, n. 206.

‡ Quia tota ardens fuit, omnes se amantes eamque tangentes incendit, et sibi assimilat.

"Portatrix ignis." If we also wish to burn with this blessed flame, let us always endeavor to draw near to our mother with prayers and affections.

Oh queen of love, Mary, the most lovely, the most beloved, and the most loving of all creatures, as St. Francis de Sales said to thee: Ah, my mother, thou wert always wholly inflamed with love to God; ah, deign to bestow on me at least one spark of it. Thou didst pray thy Son for that family whose wine had failed: They have no wine: "Vinum non habent," and wilt thou not pray for us, who are wanting in love to God, whom we are under such obligations to love? Say to Jesus: They have no love: "Amorem non habent." Do thou obtain for us this love. We ask of thee no other favor than this. Oh mother, by the great love thou hast for Jesus, graciously hear us and pray for us. Amen.

SECTION III.

OF THE CHARITY OF MARY FOR HER NEIGHBOR.

Love to God and our neighbor is commanded by the same precept: "And this commandment we have from God, that he who loveth God, love also his neighbor."* And St. Thomas gives it as a reason for this, that he who loves God, loves all things which God loves. St. Catherine

* Et hoc mandatum habemus a Deo, ut qui diligit Deum, diligat et fratrem suum. 1 Joan. iv. 21.

of Genoa one day said to God: "Oh Lord, it is thy will that I love my neighbor, and I can love none but thee." God answered her in these words: "He who loves me, loves all things loved by me." But as there never has been and never will be one who loves God more than Mary; so there never has been and never will be one who loves his neighbor more than Mary. Cornelius à Lapide, remarking on these words: "King Solomon hath made him a litter of the wood of Libanus . . . the midst he covered with charity for the daughters of Jerusalem,"* says, that this litter was the womb of Mary, in which the incarnate Word dwelt, filling the mother with charity, that she might succor all who had recourse to her.† Mary was so full of charity when she was on earth, that she assisted unasked, those who were in need, just as she did at the marriage of Cana, when she told her Son of the trouble of the family: They have no wine: "Vinum non habent,"‡ and begged him to give them wine by a miracle. Oh! how she hastened to the relief of her neighbor, when she went to the house of Elizabeth on an errand of charity: She went into the hill country in haste: "Abiit in montana cum festinatione."§ She could in no way show greater charity than by offering

* Ferculum fecit sibi rex Salomon . . . . media charitate constravit propter filias Jerusalem. Cant. iii. 9.

† B. Virginis sinus fuit ferculum ferens verbum; ideoque media charitate constratum propter filias Jerusalem quia Christus qui est ipsa charitas, maximam charitatem B. Virgini aspiravit, ut ipsa ad illam recurrentibus opem ferret.

‡ Joan. ii. 3. § Luc. i. 39.

her Son for our salvation; so that St. Bonaventure says: Mary so loved the world as to give her only-begotten Son.* Therefore St. Anselm addresses her in these words: Oh, blessed among women, who dost excel the angels in purity, and the saints in pity!† Neither does the charity of Mary for us fail, says St. Bonaventure, now she is in heaven; but is much increased there. Because now she sees more clearly the miseries of men.‡ Hence the saint said: Great was the mercy of Mary towards the wretched when she was still an exile on earth; but it is far greater now that she is reigning in heaven.§ And the angel said to St. Bridget, that there is no one who prays that does not receive graces through the charity of the Virgin.‖ Miserable should we be were Mary not to pray for us. Jesus Christ himself also said to the same saint: "If the prayers of my mother did not interpose, there would be no hope of mercy."¶

Blessed is he, says the divine mother, who hears my teachings and considers my charity, in order to practise it towards others in imitation of me: "Blessed is the man that heareth me, and

* Sic Maria dilexit mundum, ut filium suum unigenitum daret.

† O benedicta inter mulieres, quæ angelos vincit puritate et sanctos superas pietate.

‡ Quia magis nunc videt hominum miserias. Spec. c. 8.

§ Magna fuit erga miseros misericordia Mariæ adhuc exulantis in mundo, sed multo major est regnantis in cœlo. Luc. cit.

‖ Ex dulcedine Mariæ nullus est, qui non per eam, si petitur sentiat pietatem. Rev. l. c. 3, 30.

¶ Nisi preces matris meæ intervenirent, non esset spes misericordiæ L. 6, c. 29.

that watcheth daily at my gates, and waiteth at the posts of my doors."* St. Gregory Nazianzen says, that there is nothing by which we may more surely gain the love of Mary, than by the practice of charity towards our neighbor.† Hence, as God commands us, saying, "Be ye merciful, as your Father also is merciful;" ‡ so Mary appears to say to all her children: Be ye merciful, as your mother also is merciful.§ It is certain that God and Mary will show mercy to us, according to the charity we practise towards our neighbor. "Give, and it shall be given to you." "For with the same measure that you shall mete withal, it shall be measured to you again."‖ St. Methodius said: Give to the poor and receive paradise: "Da pauperi et accipe Paradisum:" for, according to the apostle, charity towards our neighbor renders us happy in this life and the next: "But piety is profitable to all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."¶ St. John Chrysostom, remarking on the words of Proverbs, "He that hath mercy on the poor, lendeth to the

* Beatus homo qui audit me, et qui vigilat ad fores meas quotidie, et observat ad postes ostii mei. Prov. viii. 34.

† Nulla res est quæ Virginis benevolentiam conciliat, ac misericordia.

‡ Estote misericordes, sicut et pater vester misericors est. Luc. viii. 36.

§ Estote misericordes sicut et mater vestra misericors est.

‖ Date et dabitur vobis; eadem quippe mensura qua mensi fueritis, remetietur vobis. Luc. vi. 38.

¶ Pietas autem ad omnia utilis est, promissionem habens vitæ, quæ nunc est, et futuræ. 1 Tim. iv. 8.

Lord,"* says, that he who assists the needy, makes God his debtor.† Oh mother of mercy, thou art full of charity for all. Do not forget my miseries. Thou dost even now see them. Recommend me to that God who denies thee nothing. Obtain for me the grace of being able to imitate thee in holy charity towards God and towards my neighbor. Amen.

SECTION IV.

OF THE FAITH OF MARY.

As the blessed Virgin is the mother of love and of hope, thus, also, is she the mother of faith. "I am the mother of fair love, and of fear, and knowledge, and of holy hope."‡ And justly, says St. Irenæus, since Mary repaired by her faith that loss which Eve caused by her incredulity.§ Eve, Tertullian also says, because she chose to believe the serpent rather than the Word of God, brought death into the world, but our queen, believing the words of the angel, that she, remaining a virgin, was to become the mother of the Lord, brought salvation to the world.‖ For St. Augustine says that Mary, giving her consent to the incarnation of the Word, by means of her faith opened paradise to

* Fœneratur Domino qui miseretur pauperi.

† Si Deo fœneratur is ergo nobis debitor est.

‡ Ego mater pulchræ dilectionis, et timoris, et agnitionis, et sanctæ spei. Eccli. xxiv. 24.

§ Quod Heva ligavit per incredulitatem, Maria solvit per fidem.

‖ Crediderat Heva serpenti, Maria Gabrieli; quod illa credendo deliquit, hæc credendo delevit.

men.* Also Richard, commenting on the words of St. Paul: "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the believing wife," † says: This is the believing woman by whose faith the unbelieving Adam and all his posterity are saved.‡ Hence, on account of her faith, Elizabeth pronounced the Virgin blessed: Blessed art thou that hast believed, because those things shall be accomplished in thee that were spoken by the Lord.§ And St. Augustine added: Mary is more blessed by receiving the faith of Christ than by conceiving the flesh of Christ.‖

Father Suarez says that the holy Virgin had more faith than all men and all the angels. She saw her Son in the stable of Bethlehem, and believed him the Creator of the world. She saw him flying from Herod, and yet believed that he was the King of kings. She saw him born, and believed him to be eternal. She saw him poor and in need of food, and believed him to be Lord of the universe, laid on straw, and she believed him omnipotent. She observed that he did not speak, and she believed him to be the infinite Wisdom. She heard him weeping, and she believed him to be the joy of paradise.

* Fides Mariæ cœlum aperuit, cum angelo nunclanti consensit.

† Sanctificatus est enim vir infidelis per mulierem fidelem. 1 Cor. vii. 14.

‡ Hæc est mulier fidelis, per cujus fidem salvatus est Adam vir infidelis et tota posteritas.

§ Beata quæ credidisti quoniam perficientur ea, quæ dicta sunt tibi a Domino. Luc. i. 45.

‖ Beatior Maria percipiendo fidem Christi, quam concipiendo carnem Christi.

Finally, she saw him in death, despised and crucified, but although the faith of others might have wavered, Mary remained firm in the belief that he was God. St. Antoninus says, remarking on the words: There stood by the cross of Jesus his mother: "Stabat juxta crucem Jesu mater ejus," Mary stood supported by her faith, which she retained firm in the divinity of Christ.* And it is for this reason, says the saint, that in the office of Tenebræ, only one candle is left lighted. St. Leo, when treating of this subject, applies to the Virgin this passage of Proverbs: "Her lamp shall not be put out in the night." † On the words of Isaias, "I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the Gentiles, there is not a man with me," ‡ St. Thomas remarks: He says a man, on account of the Virgin, in whom faith never failed.§ Whence the blessed Albertus Magnus says, that Mary practised then a most perfect faith. She had faith in a most excellent degree; who, even when the disciples were doubting, did not doubt. Mary, therefore, by her great faith merited to become the light of all the faithful, as St. Methodius calls her: "Fidelium fax." And by St. Cyril of Alexandria: The queen of the true faith: "Sceptrum orthodoxæ fidei." And the

* Stabat mater fide elevata, quam de Christi divinitate fixa retinuit.

† Non extinguetur in nocte lucerna ejus. xxxi. 18.

‡ Torcular calcavi solus, et de gentibus non est vir mecum. lxiii. 3.

§ Dicit vir propter Virginem, in qua nunquam fides defecit.

holy Church herself attributes to the Virgin, by the merit of her faith, the destruction of all heresies: "Rejoice, oh Virgin Mary, for thou alone hast destroyed all heresies throughout the world."* St. Thomas of Villanova also says, explaining the words of the Holy Spirit, "Thou hast wounded my heart, my sister, my spouse . . . with one of thy eyes,"† that the eyes signify faith, by which the Virgin gave the greatest pleasure to the Son of God.‡

St. Ildephonsus exhorts us to imitate the faith of Mary: "Imitamini signaculum fidei Mariæ." But how are we to imitate this faith of Mary? Faith is at the same time a gift and a virtue. It is a gift of God, in so far as it is a light which God infuses into the soul, and it is also a virtue in so far as it is exercised by the soul. Hence faith is given us not only to serve as a rule of belief, but also of action. Therefore St. Gregory says: He truly believes who, by his works, practises what he believes.§ And St. Augustine: Thou sayest, "I believe," do what you say, and it is faith.‖ And this is to have a lively faith, namely, to live according to our belief. "My just

* Gaude, Maria Virgo, cunctas hæreses sola interemisti inuniverso mundo. Ant. 1, Noct. 3.

† Vulnerasti cor meum, soror mea, sponsa . . . in uno oculorum tuorum. Cant. iv. 9.

‡ Per oculos fidem designat, qua Dei filio Virgo maxime complacuit.

§ Ille vero credit, qui exercet operando quod credit.

‖ Dicis, credo, fac quod dicis, et fides est.

man liveth by faith."* It was thus the blessed Virgin lived, very differently from those who do not live according to what they believe, whose faith is dead, as St. James says: Faith without good works is dead: "Fide sine operibus mortua est."† Diogenes went about seeking a man upon earth: "Hominem quæro;" but God seems seeking a Christian among the many faithful: "Christianum quæro." For very few are they who have the works, the greater part have only the name; but to these should be said what Alexander said to that cowardly soldier who was also named Alexander: Change either your name or your conduct: "Aut nomen, aut mores muta." But, as Father Avila used to say: It would be better if these miserable creatures were put in confinement as madmen, believing as they do, that a happy eternity is prepared for him who lives well, and an unhappy eternity for him who lives ill, and yet living as if they did not believe this. St. Augustine therefore exhorts us to see things with Christian eyes, that is, to see according to faith: "Oculos Christianorum habete." For St. Theresa was accustomed to say, that all sins arise from a want of faith. Let us therefore implore the holy Virgin, that by the merit of her faith she may obtain for us a lively faith. Oh Lady, increase our faith: Domina adauge nobis fidem.

* Justus autem meus ex fide vidit. Hebr. x. 38. † ii. 30.

SECTION V.

OF THE HOPE OF MARY.

From faith springs hope, for God enlightens us by faith with a knowledge of his goodness and his promises, that we may raise by hope to the desire of possessing him. Mary, then, having the virtue of an extraordinary faith, had also the virtue of an extraordinary hope, which made her say with David: "But it is good for me to adhere to my God, and to put my hope in the Lord God."* Mary was, indeed, that faithful spouse of the Holy Spirit, of whom it was said: "Who is this that cometh up from the desert, flowing with delights, leaning on her beloved?"† For she was always perfectly detached from affection to the world, which to her appeared a desert; and placing no confidence either in creatures or her own merits, but relying entirely on divine grace, in which alone she trusted, she always advanced in the divine love; and thus Ailgrin said of her: She ascended from the desert, that is, from the world, which she deserted and esteemed such a desert, that she turned away from it all her affection. Leaning upon her beloved; for she trusted not in her own merits, but in the grace of him who bestows grace.‡

* Mihi autem adhærere Deo bonum est; ponere in Domino Deo spem meam. Psal. lxxii. 28.

† Quæ est ista quæ ascendit de deserto, deliciis affluens innixa super dilectum suum? Cant. viii. 5.

‡ Ascendit de deserto, scilicet de mundo, quem sic deseruit, et

And the holy Virgin plainly showed how great was her confidence in God: first, when she saw the trouble of her holy spouse, Joseph, because he knew not the mode of her miraculous pregnancy, and thought of leaving her: But Joseph . . . . minded to put her away privately: "Joseph autem. . . . voluit occulte dimittere eam."* It appeared then necessary, as we have already said, that she should discover to Joseph the hidden mystery; but no, she would not herself reveal the grace she had received; she thought it better to abandon herself to divine providence, trusting that God himself would protect her innocence and her reputation. Cornelius à Lapide makes precisely the same remark, commenting upon these very words of the Gospel: The blessed Virgin was unwilling to make known this secret to Joseph, lest she should seem to boast of her gifts, but resigned herself in perfect confidence to the care of God, trusting that he would protect her innocence and reputation.† Moreover, she showed her confidence in God, when, as the time for the birth of Christ approached, she saw herself in Bethlehem shut out from the lodgings even of the

tamquam desertum reputavit, ut ab ipso omnem suum averterit affectum. Innixa super dilectum suum, nam non suis meritis, sed ipsius innitebatur gratiæ, qui gratiam tribuit. Ap. Cornel. in Cant. viii. 5.

* Matth. i. 19.

† B. Virgo autem noluit ultro secretum hoc Josepho pandere, ne sua dona jactare videretur, sed Dei curæ idipsum resignavit certissime confidens, Deum suam innocentiam et famam tutaturam.

poor, and obliged to bring forth her Son in a stable. "And she laid him in a manger, because there was no room for him in the inn."* She did not then utter a single word of complaint, but abandoning herself to God, trusted that he would assist her in her need. The divine mother also showed how much she trusted in the divine providence, when warned by Joseph that they were obliged to fly into Egypt, she set out the same night on so long a journey to a foreign and unknown country, without preparation, without money, without other company than that of her infant Jesus and her poor spouse: "Who arose and took the child and his mother by night, and retired into Egypt."† But much more did Mary make known her confidence, when she asked from her Son the favor of the miracle of wine at the marriage of Cana; for having said: They have no wine: "Vinum non habent;" Jesus answered her: "Woman, what is it to thee and to me? my hour has not yet come."‡ But after this answer, by which it seemed clearly that he refused her request, she, trusting in the divine goodness, directed the people of the house to do as the Son should order, because the grace was secure: Whatsoever he shall say to you, do ye: "Quodcumque dixerit vobis facite." And Jesus Christ did, indeed, order

* Et reclinavit eum in præsepio, qua non erat eis locus in diversorio, Luc. ii. 7.

† Qui consurgens accepit puerum, et matrem ejus nocte, et secessit in Ægyptum. Matth. ii. 14.

‡ Quid mihi et tibi est mulier, nondum venit hora mea. Joan. ii. 4.

that the vessels should be filled with water, and then changed it into wine.

Let us learn then from Mary to trust in God as we ought, but principally as to what concerns our eternal salvation, in which, although our co-operation is necessary, yet we ought to hope from God alone the grace necessary for obtaining it, entirely distrusting our own strength and saying with the apostle : I can do all things in him who strengtheneth me : "Omnia possum in eo qui me confortat."*

Ah, my most holy Lady, of thee Ecclesiasticus says, that thou art the mother of holy hope : "Mater sanctæ spei."† The holy Church says of thee that thou art hope itself : Hail, our hope : "Spes nostra salve." What other hope then am I seeking ? Thou, after Christ, art all my hope ; thus St. Bernard called thee, thus I also wish to call thee : The whole reason of my hope : "Tota ratio spes meæ; " and I will always say to thee with St. Bonaventure : Oh salvation of those who invoke thee, save me : "O salus te invocantium salva me.

SECTION VI.

OF THE CHASTITY OF MARY.

Since the fall of Adam the flesh being rebellious against reason, the virtue of chastity is the most difficult for men to practise. Of all com-

* Phil. iv. 13. † Eccli. xxiv. 24.

bats, says St. Augustine, those of chastity are the most severe, for the battle is daily and the victory rare.* But eternal praise to the Lord who has given us in Mary a great example of this virtue. With justice says blessed Albertus Magnus, is Mary called the Virgin of virgins, for she being the first who offered her virginity to God, without the counsel or example of others, has brought to him all virgins who imitate her.† As David had already predicted: After her virgins shall be brought to the temple of the king: "Adducentur virgines post eam in templum regis."‡ Without counsel or example; yes, for St. Bernard exclaims: Oh Virgin, who has taught thee to please God by virginity, and on earth to lead the life of an angel? § Ah! answers Sophronius, it is for this God has chosen this most pure Virgin for his mother, that she may be an example of chastity to all.‖ Hence St. Ambrose has called Mary the standard-bearer of chastity: "Quæ signum Virginitatis extulit."

By reason of this her purity the blessed Virgin was also called by the holy Spirit: Beautiful as the turtle-dove: Thy cheeks are beautiful as

* Inter omnia certamina duriora sunt prælia castitatis, ubi quotidiana est pugna et rara victoria.

† Virgo virginum, quæ sine consilio, sine exemplo munus virginitatis Deo obtulit, et per sui imitationem omnes virgines germinavit. Mar. p. 29.

‡ Psal. lxiv. 15.

§ O Virgo quis te docuit Deo placere virginitate, et in terris angelicam ducere vitam. Hom. 4. Sup. Miss.

‖ Christus matrem virginem elegit, ut ipsa omnibus esset exemplum castitatis. Ap. Parav. p. 2, c. 1.

the turtle-dove's: "Pulchræ sunt genæ tuæ sicut turturis."* Mary, says St. Aponius, is a most chaste turtle: "Turtur pudicissima Maria." And therefore she has also been called a lily: As the lily among the thorns, so is my love among the daughters: "Sicut lilium inter spinas, sic amica mea inter filias."† St. Denis the Carthusian, commenting on this passage, says, that she has been called a lily among thorns because all other virgins were thorns either to themselves or others; but the blessed Virgin has never been one to herself or others.‡ For by her presence alone she infused into all, thoughts and affections of purity: "Intuentium corda ad castitatem invitabat."§ And this is confirmed by St. Thomas, who says that the beauty of the blessed Virgin encouraged chastity in all who beheld her: "Pulchritudo B. Virginis intuentes ad castitatem excitabat."‖ St. Jerome declares himself of the opinion that St. Joseph preserved his virginity by the society of Mary, for the saint thus writes against the heretic Helvidius, who denied the virginity of Mary: Thou sayest that Mary did not remain a virgin; I take it upon myself to maintain more than that, even that Joseph himself preserved his virginity through Mary.¶ A certain author

* Cant. i. 9. † Cant. ii. 2.

‡ Omnes aliæ virgines spinæ fuerunt vel sibi vel aliis; B. Virgo nec sibi, nec aliis.

§ Id. S. Dio. ‖ Ap. Par. loc. cit.

¶ Tu dicis Mariam virginem non permansisse? Ego mihi plus vindico, etiam ipsum Joseph virginem fuisse per Mariam L. adv. Helvid.

says that the blessed Virgin so loved this virtue, that to preserve it, she would have been ready to renounce even the dignity of mother of God. This we may learn from her own answer to the archangel: "How shall this be done, because I know not man?"* and from the words she afterwards added: Be it done to me according to thy word : "Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum ;" signifying by this that she gave her consent on the condition of which the angel had assured her, namely, that she should become a mother by means of the Holy Spirit alone.

St. Ambrose says: He who has preserved chastity is an angel, he who has lost it is a devil.† According to the words of our Lord: "They shall be as the angels of God in heaven."‡ But the unchaste become odious to God as the devils. And St. Remigius said that the greater number of adults are lost through this vice. The victory over this vice is rare, as has been said in the words of St. Augustine at the beginning of this section; but why is it rare? Because the means for conquering it are not put in use. The means are three according to Bellarmine, and the masters of the spiritual life: Fasting, avoiding dangerous occasions, and prayer: "Jejuniun, periculorum evitatio, et oratio." By fasting is meant mortification, particularly of the eyes and of the appetite. The most holy Mary,

* Quomodo fiet istud, quoniam virum non cognosco. Luc. i. 34
† Qui castitatem servavit, angelus est, qui perdidit, diabolus.
‡ Matth. xxii.

although she was full of divine grace, was so mortified with her eyes that she kept them always cast down, as St. Epiphanius and St. John Damascene inform us, and never fixed them on any one; they say that from her childhood she was so modest that she was the wonder of all. And hence St. Luke remarks, that in going to visit St. Elizabeth: She went with haste: "Abiit cum festinatione," that she might not be long seen in public. Philibert relates with regard to her food, that it was revealed to a hermit named Felix, that the infant Mary took milk only once a day. And St. Gregory of Tours asserts that, during her whole life, she fasted always: "Nullo tempore Maria non jejunavit;" and St. Bonaventure adds, that Mary would never have found so much grace unless she had been temperate in food, for grace and gluttony cannot subsist together.* In a word, Mary practised mortification in every thing, so that of her it was said: My hands dropped with myrrh: "Manus meæ stillaverunt myrrham."†

The second means is to fly the occasions of sin. He that is aware of the snares shall be secure: "Qui autem cavet laqueos, securus erit."‡ Hence St. Philip Neri said, that in this warfare cowards conquer; that is, those who avoid dangerous occasions. Mary shunned as much as possible the sight of men; and therefore St. Luke says that in her visit to St. Elizabeth, she went with haste

* Nunquam Maria tantam gratiam invenissit, nisi cibo temperatissima fuisset; non enim se compatiuntur gratia et gula.

† Cant. v. 5. ‡ Prov. xi. 15.

into the hill country: "Abiit in montana cum festinatione." And a certain author remarks that the Virgin left Elizabeth before the birth of the Baptist, as we learn from the Gospel itself, in which it is said that "Mary abode with her about three months; and she returned to her own house. Now Elizabeth's full time of being delivered was come, and she brought forth a son."* And why did she not wait till his birth? In order to avoid the conversation and visits which would follow that event. The third means is prayer. "And as I knew," said the wise man, "that I could not otherwise be continent except God gave it . . . . I went to the Lord and besought him."† And the blessed Virgin revealed to St. Elisabeth, a Benedictine nun, that she had not acquired any virtue without effort and continual prayer.‡ St. John Damascene says that Mary is pure and a lover of purity: "Pura est et puritatem amans," and therefore she cannot endure the impure. But whoever has recourse to her will certainly be delivered from this vice by only pronouncing her name with confidence. And the venerable John of Avila says that many temptations against chastity have been overcome solely by devotion to the immaculate Virgin. Oh Mary, oh most pure dove, how many are

* Mansit autem Maria cum illa quasi mensibus tribus; et reversa est in domum suam. Elisabeth autem impletum est tempus pariendi, et peperit filium. Cap. i. 56.

† Et ut scivi quoniam aliter non possem esse continens nisi Deus det . . . . aii Dominum, et deprecatus sum illum. Sap. viii. 21.

‡ Ap. S. Bon. de Vit. Chr. c. 3.

in hell through the vice of impurity! Oh Lady, obtain for us that always in our temptations we may have recourse to thee, and invoke thee, saying: Mary, Mary, help us. Amen.

SECTION VII.

OF THE POVERTY OF MARY.

Our loving Redeemer chose to be poor on this earth in order to teach us to despise the goods of this world: "Being rich," says St. Paul, "he became poor for your sake, that through his poverty you might be rich."* For this reason Jesus Christ says to each one who wishes to be his disciple: "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast and give it to the poor, and come follow me." † Behold his most perfect disciple Mary, who indeed imitated his example. Father Canisius proves that the holy Virgin could have lived in comfort on the inheritance left her by her parents, but she was content to remain poor, reserving to herself a small portion, and giving the rest in alms to the temple and to the poor. Many are of opinion that Mary also made a vow of poverty,‡ and it

* Propter vos egenus factus est, cum esset dives, et illius inopia vos divites essetis. 2 Cor. viii. 9.

† Si vis perfectus esse, vende quæ habes, et da pauperibus . . . et veni, sequere me. Matth. xix. 21.

‡ Ap. Parav. p. c. 2.

is known that she herself said to St. Bridget: "From the beginning I vowed in my heart never to possess any thing in the world." * The gifts received from the holy Magi were certainly not of small value, but St. Bernard attests that she distributed them all to the poor.† And we learn that the divine mother immediately gave to others the presents above mentioned, from the fact that when she went to the temple she did not offer the lamb, which was the oblation made by those who were able, as we read in Leviticus: "For a son she shall bring a lamb,"‡ ..... but she offered two turtle-doves and two young pigeons, the oblation of the poor: "And to offer a sacrifice, according as it is written in the law of the Lord, a pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons." § Mary herself said to St. Bridget: "All that I had I gave to the poor, and kept nothing for myself but poor food and clothing." ‖

Through love of poverty she did not disdain to marry a poor carpenter, like St. Joseph, and afterwards, as St. Bonaventure relates, to sup-

* A principio vovi in corde meo nihil unquam possidere in mundo. L. 1, c. 10.

† Aurum sibi oblatum a magis non modicum, prout decebat eorum regiam majestatem, non sibi reservavit, sed pauperibus per Joseph distribuit. Ap. Par. loc. cit.

‡ Pro filio .... deferet agnum. xii. 6.

§ Et ut darent hostiam secundum quod dictum est in lege Domini, par turturum aut duos pullos columbarum. Luc. ii. 24.

‖ Omnia quæ habere potui dedi indigentibus, nihilque nisibum tenuem et vestitum reservavi. Rev. l. 1, c. 10.

port herself by the work of her hands, as sewing or spinning. An angel revealed to St. Bridget concerning Mary, that worldly riches were in her eyes vile as dirt: "Mundanæ divitæ velut lutum sibi vilescebat." In a word, she always lived in poverty, and she died in poverty; for as Metaphrastes and Nicephorus relate, she left nothing behind her at her death but two poor garments to two women, who had assisted her during life.*

He who loves riches, said St. Philip Neri, will never become a saint; and St. Theresa also said: It justly follows that he who goes in search of things lost is also lost. On the other hand, the same saint said, that this virtue of poverty is a good that comprises all other goods. I have said the virtue of poverty which, according to St. Bernard, does not consist alone in being poor, but in loving poverty: "Non paupertas, sed amor paupertatis virtus est." Therefore Jesus Christ has said: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."† Blessed, because they who wish for nothing but God, in God find every good, and find in poverty their paradise on earth, as St. Francis found it in saying: My God and my all: "Deus meus et omnia." Let us, then, according to the exhortation of St. Augustine, love that only good in which is every good: "Ama unum bonum, in quo sunt omnia

* Ap. auct. Vit. Mar. L. 5, c. 13.

† Beati pauperes spiritu quoniam ipsorum est regnum cœlorum. Matth. v. 3.

bona." And let us pray our Lord with St. Ignatius: Give me only thy love together with thy grace, and I am rich enough.* And when poverty afflicts us, let us console ourselves by the thought that Jesus and his mother have also been poor like us.†

Ah, my most holy mother, thou hadst in truth reason to say, that in God was thy joy: "And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour,"‡ for in this world thou didst not desire nor love any other good than God. Draw me after thee: "Trahe me post te." Oh Lady! detach me from the world, and draw me after thee to love that one who alone merits to be loved. Amen.

SECTION VIII.

OF THE OBEDIENCE OF MARY.

It was through the affection which Mary bore to the virtue of obedience, that when the annunciation was made to her by St. Gabriel, she did not wish to call herself by any other name than that of handmaid: Behold the handmaid of the Lord: "Ecce ancilla Domini." Indeed, says St. Thomas of Villanova, this faithful handmaid neither in act, word, nor thought, ever dis-

* Amorem tui solum cum gratia tua mihi dones, et dives sum satis

† Pauper multum consolari potest de paupertate Mariæ, et de pau pere Christo.

‡ Et exultavit spiritus meus in Deo salutari meo.

obeyed the Lord, but divested of all self-will, she always, and in all things, lived obedient to the divine will.* She herself declared that God was pleased with her obedience when she said: He regarded the humility of his handmaid: "Respexit humilitatem ancillæ suæ;"† for this is the humility of a servant, to be always prompt to obey. St. Augustine says, that the divine mother remedied by her obedience the evil that Eve had caused by her disobedience.‡ The obedience of Mary was far more perfect than that of all the other saints, for all men being inclined to evil through original sin, they all feel difficulty in doing right; but not so the blessed Virgin; for as St. Bernardine says: Because she was free from original sin, there was in her no hindrance in obeying God, but she was like a wheel readily moved at every divine breath;§ hence her only occupation on this earth, as the same saint expresses it, was to discover and do what was pleasing to God.‖ Of her it was said: My soul

* O vera ancilla, quæ neque dicto, neque facto, neque cogitatu unquam contradixit Altissimo, nihil sibi libertatis reservans, sed per omnia subdita Deo. Conc. de Annunc.

† Luc. i. 48.

‡ Sicut Heva inobediens et sibi et universo generi humano causa facta est mortis; sic et Maria Virgo obediens et sibi et universo generi humano facta est causa salutis. Ap. Parav. p. 2, c. 11.

§ In B. Virgine nullum fuit omnino retardativum, proinde rota volubilis fuit secundum omnem Spiritus Sancti motu. To. 3, Serm. 1, a. 2, c. 1.

‖ Virgo semper habuit continuum aspectum ad Dei beneplacitum et ferventem consensum. To. 3, s. 41, a. 3, c. 2.

melted when he spoke: "Anima mea liquefacta est, ut dilectus meus locutus est."* Commenting on this passage, Richard says that the soul of Mary was like metal in a state of fusion, ready to take any form that was pleasing to God.†

Mary proved indeed the readiness of her obedience, in the first place, when, in order to please God, she was willing even to obey the Roman emperor, and made the journey, fifty miles, to Bethlehem, in winter, being pregnant, and so poor that she was obliged to bring forth her Son in a stable. She was also ready at the notice of St. Joseph, to set out immediately on that very night upon the longer and more difficult journey into Egypt. And Silveira asks why the command to fly into Egypt, was given to St. Joseph and not to the blessed Virgin, who was to suffer the most from the journey? And he answers: Lest the Virgin should be deprived of an opportunity for performing an act of obedience for which she was most ready.‡ But above all, she showed her heroic obedience, when, in order to obey the divine will, she offered her Son to death with so much firmness that, as St. Ildephonsus says, she would have been ready to crucify him, if executioners had been

* Anima mea liquefacta est, ut dilectus meus locutus est. Cant. v. 6.

† Anima mea liquefacta est per incendium charitatis, parata instar metalli liquefacti decurrere in omnes modulos divinæ voluntatis.

‡ Ne Virgini subtrahatur occasio exercendi actum obedientiæ ad quem erat paratissima.

wanting.* Hence the venerable Bede, commenting on those words of the Redeemer to that woman in the Gospel who exclaimed: "Blessed is the womb that bore thee:" "Yea, rather, blessed are they who hear the Word of God and keep it," † says, that Mary was more happy through obedience to the divine will, than in being the mother of God himself.‡

For this reason it is, that those who love obedience are very pleasing to the Virgin. She appeared once to a religious, a Franciscan, named Accorso, in his cell, who being called by obedience to go and hear the confession of a sick person, went out, but when he returned he found Mary waiting for him, and she greatly praised his obedience. As, on the other hand, she greatly blamed another religious, who, when the bell had summoned him to the refectory, delayed in order to finish certain devotions.§ The Virgin, speaking to St. Bridget of the security found in obeying a spiritual father, said: Obedience has brought all the saints to glory: "Obedientia omnes introducit ad gloriam." ‖ St. Philip Neri also says, that God requires no account of things done in obedience, having him-

* Parata enim stetit, si deesset manus percussoris. Ap. Parav. p. 2. c. 12.

† Beatus venter qui te portavit . . . . Quinimmo beati qui audiunt verbum Dei, et custodiunt illud. Luc. xi. 28.

‡ Et inde quidem beata, quia Verbi incarnandi ministra facta est; sed inde multo beatior quia ejusdem semper amandi custos manebat æterna. C. 40, in Luc.

§ March. Diar. della Mad. ‖ Rev. l. 6, c. 11.

self declared: "He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me." * The mother of God herself revealed to St. Bridget, that through the merit of her obedience she had obtained from the Lord that all penitent sinners who have recourse to her, should be pardoned.† Ah, our queen and mother, pray Jesus for us, obtain for us through the merit of thy obedience that we may be faithful in obeying his will, and the commands of our spiritual fathers. Amen.

SECTION IX.

OF THE PATIENCE OF MARY.

SINCE this earth is a place of merit, it is justly called a valley of tears; for we are all placed here to suffer, and by patience to obtain for our souls eternal life: "In your patience you shall possess your souls," ‡ said our Lord. God gave us the Virgin Mary as an example of all virtues, but especially as an example of patience. St. Francis of Sales, among other things, remarks, that at the nuptials of Cana Jesus Christ gave an answer to the most holy Virgin, by which he seemed to pay but little regard to her prayers: Woman, what is that to thee and to me? Quid

* Qui vos audit me audit; et qui vos spernit, me spernit. Luc. x. 16.

† Pro obedientia mea tantam potestatem obtinui, quod nullus tam immundis peccator, si ad me cum emendatione proposito convertitur et cum corde contrito, non habebit veniam.

‡ In patientia vestra possidebitis animas vestras. Luc. xxi. 19.

mihi et tibi est, mulier?" precisely for this reason, that he might give us an example of the patience of his holy mother. But why seek further? The whole life of Mary was a continual exercise of patience, for, as an angel revealed to St. Bridget, the blessed Virgin lived always in the midst of sufferings.* Her compassion alone for the sufferings of the Redeemer was enough to make her a martyr of patience; wherefore St. Bonaventure says: The crucified conceived the crucified: "Crucifixa crucifixum concepit." When we spoke of her dolors, we considered all she suffered, as well in her journey and life in Egypt, as during the whole time she lived with her Son in the workshop of Nazareth. But the presence of Mary on Calvary, with her dying Jesus, is alone enough to show us how constant and sublime was her patience: There stood by the cross of Jesus, his mother: "Stabat juxta crucem Jesu mater ejus." Then, by the merit of this her patience, as blessed Albertus Magnus remarks, she became our mother, and brought us forth to the life of grace.†

If we desire then to be the children of Mary, we must seek to imitate her patience. And what, says St. Cyprian, can enrich us more with merit in this life, and glory in the other, than bearing sufferings with patience?‡ God said by the mouth of the prophet Osee: I will hedge up

* Sicut rosa crescere solet inter spinus; ita hæc venerabilis Virgo in hoc mundo crevit inter tribulationes. Serm. Ang. c. 10.

† Maria facta est mater nostra, quos genuit filio compatiendo.

‡ Quid utilius ad vitam, vel majus ad gloriam, quam patientia.

thy way with thorns: "Sepiam viam tuam spinis."* St. Gregory remarks on this passage, that the ways of the elect are hedged with thorns: "Electorum viæ spinis sepiuntur." For as a hedge of thorns protects the vine, so God encompasses his servants with tribulation, in order that they may not become attached to the earth; therefore St. Cyprian concludes, patience delivers us from sin and from hell: "Patientia nos servat." And it is patience that makes the saints: "Patience hath a perfect work,"† bearing in peace the crosses that come to us directly from God, as sickness, poverty, &c., as well as those that come to us from men, such as persecutions, injuries, &c. St. John saw all the saints with palms, the emblem of martyrdom, in their hands. "After this I saw a great multitude . . . . and palms were in their hands;"‡ signifying by this that all men must be martyrs by the sword, or by patience. Be then joyful, exclaims St. Gregory: We can be martyrs without blood, if we preserve patience.§ If we suffer the afflictions of this life, as St. Bernard says, patiently and joyfully: "Patienter, et gaudenter," oh, how much every pain endured for God will obtain for us in heaven! Hence the apostle encourages us in these words: "Our tribulation, which is momentary and light, worketh for

* 2, 6. † Jac. i. 4.

‡ Post hæc vidi turbam magnam . . . . . et palmæ in manibus eorum. Apoc. vii. 9.

§ Nos sine ferro martyres esse possumus, si patientiam cu todiamus.

us . . . an eternal weight of glory."* Beautiful are the instructions of St. Theresa on this subject: "He who embraces the cross," she says, "does not feel it." And again: "When a person resolves to suffer, the pain is over." And if we feel our crosses heavy, let us have recourse to Mary, who is called by the Church: the comforter of the afflicted: "Consolatrix afflictorum;" and by St. John Damascene: The remedy for all sorrows of the heart: "Omnium dolorum cordium medicamentum." Ah, my most sweet Lady, thou, though innocent, didst suffer with so much patience, and shall I, who am deserving of hell, refuse to suffer? My mother, to-day I ask of thee the grace not to be exempt from crosses, but to support them with patience. For the love of Jesus I pray thee to obtain for me nothing less than this grace from God; through you I hope for it.

SECTION X.

OF THE PRAYER OF MARY.

No soul on this earth has ever followed so perfectly as the blessed Virgin that great lesson of our Saviour: We ought always to pray, and not to faint: "Oportet semper orare, et non deficere."† From no other, says St. Bonaventure, can we better take example, and learn the

* Momentaneum, et leve tribulationis nostræ . . . . æternum gloriæ pondus operatur in nobis. 2 Cor. iv. 17.

† Luc. xviii. 1.

necessity of persevering in prayer, than from Mary. Mary gave an example, that we ought to follow and not faint.* For the blessed Albertus Magnus asserts, that after Jesus Christ, the divine mother was the most perfect in the virtue of prayer, of all who ever have lived or ever will live: "Virtus orationis in B. Virgine excellentissima fuit."† First, because her prayer was continual and persevering. From the first moment in which she had life, and with life the perfect use of reason, as we have said above in the Discourse on her Nativity, she began to pray. And, moreover, that she might devote herself more to prayer, she wished, when a child of only three years, to shut herself up in the retirement of the temple; where, as she herself revealed to St. Elizabeth (virgin), among the other hours that she allotted to prayer, she was accustomed to rise at midnight and go to pray before the altar of the temple.‡ And, in order to meditate on the sufferings of Jesus, according to Odilone, she also frequently visited the places of our Lord's nativity, passion, and burial.§ Moreover, her prayer, as St. Denis the Carthusian has written, was wholly recollected,

* Maria exemplum dedit quod oportet sequi, et non deficere. Spec. c. 4.

† Sup. Miss. 80.

‡ Surgebam semper in noctis medio et pergebam ante altare templi, et ibi petitiones meas præsentabam. V. Ap. S. Bon. de Vit. Chr. c. 3.

§ Loca dominicæ nativitatis, passionis, sepulturæ frequenter visitabat.

free from all distractions, and every irregular inclination.*

Therefore the blessed Virgin, through her love of prayer, had so great a love of solitude, that, as she said to St. Bridget, when she lived in the temple she even abstained from intercourse with her holy parents. St. Jerome, meditating on the words of Isaias—"Behold a Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel"†—says, that in Hebrew the word *virgin* properly signifies a *retired virgin*; so that Mary's love of solitude was already predicted by the prophet. Richard says that the angel addressed her in the words, The Lord is with thee: "Dominus tecum," on account of her great love of solitude.‡ And St. Vincent Ferrer asserts that the divine mother never went from home, except to go to the temple, and then she went entirely recollected, having her eyes always cast down.§ When going to visit St. Elizabeth, She went with haste: "Abiit cum festinatione;" and from this St. Ambrose says virgins should learn to shun the public eye. St. Bernard teaches that Mary, through her love of prayer and solitude, was always careful to avoid

* Nulla unquam inordinata affectio, nec distractio mentem Virginis a contemplationis lumine revocavit nec occupatio ulla exterior. De Laud. Virg. l. 2, art. 8.

† Ecce Virgo concipiet, et pariet filium, et vocabitur nomen ejus Emmanuel. C. vii. 1.

‡ Merito solitudinis quam ipsa summe diligebat. L. 1, c. 6.

§ Nunquam exibat e domo, nisi quando ibat ad templum; et tunc ibat tota composita, semper habens oculos suos ad terram. Serm. in Virg. Nat.

conversation with men.* Hence she is called by the Holy Spirit the turtle-dove: Thy cheeks are beautiful as the turtle-dove's: "Pulchræ sunt genæ tuæ sicut turturis."† Which words Vergellus thus explains: The turtle-dove is a lover of solitude, and is an emblem of the unitive power of the soul.‡ So the Virgin always lived solitary in this world, as in a desert, and therefore it was said of her: Who is this that goeth up by the desert, as a pillar of smoke? "Quæ est ista quæ ascendit per desertum, sicut virgula fumi?"§ On which words Rupert the Abbot says: Thus thou didst ascend by the desert, having a solitary soul: "Talis ascendisti per desertum animam habens solitariam."

Philo said that God speaks to souls only in solitude: "Dei sermo amat deserta." And God himself declared this by the prophet Osee, when he said: I will lead her into the wilderness, and I will speak to her heart: "Ducam eam in solitudinem, et loquar ad cor ejus."‖ And hence St. Jerome exclaims: Oh solitude, in which God familiarly converses with his servants!¶ Yes, says St. Bernard, because the quiet and the silence that is enjoyed in solitude, force the soul to

* In proposito erat hominum fugere frequentias, vitare colloquia.

† Cant. i. 9.

‡ Turtur est solivaga, et signat mentis virtutem unitivam. Ap. S. Bon. Dist. 7.

§ Cant. iii. 6. ‖ ii. 14.

¶ O solitudo, in qua Deus cum suis familiariter loquitur, et conversatur.

leave the earth in thought, and to meditate on the things of heaven.* Oh, most holy Virgin, obtain for us a love of prayer and solitude, that detaching ourselves from the love of creatures, we may aspire only after God and heaven, where we hope one day to see thee, to praise and love thee with thy Son, Jesus, forever and ever. Amen. "Come over to me, all ye that desire me, and be filled with my fruits."† The fruits of Mary are her virtues.

None has appeared like unto thee, in all time before or after thee.‡

Thou alone, oh woman without equal, hast been pleasing to Christ.

VARIOUS PRACTICES OF DEVOTION TO THE DIVINE MOTHER.

THE queen of heaven is so liberal, as St. Andrew of Crete says, that she makes a large return for the smallest devotions of her servants.§ But two conditions are necessary for this: First, that we offer her the homage of a soul pure from sin; for otherwise Mary will say to us what she said to a soldier, a man of vicious habits, who, as

* Silentium, et a strepitu quies cogit cœlestia meditari.

† Transite ad me omnes qui concupiscitis me, et a generationibus meis implemini. Eccli. xxiv. 26.

‡ Nec primam similem visa est, nec habere sequentem.
Sola sine exemplo placuisti fœmina Christo. Sedulius.

§ Cum sit magnificentissima, solet maxima pro minimis reddere. Or. 2, de Dorm. Virg.

St. Peter Celestine relates,* offered every day a devotion to the Virgin. One day when he was suffering greatly from hunger, our Lady appeared to him, and presented him some exquisite viands, but in a vase so filthy that he did not venture to taste them. "I am the mother of God," Mary then said to him," who has come to relieve thy hunger." "But I cannot taste from this vase," answered the soldier. "And do you wish," replied Mary, "that I should accept thy devotions, offered me from a soul so polluted ?" The soldier, at these words, was converted, became a hermit, lived thirty years in the desert, and at death the Virgin again appeared to him and conducted him to heaven. We have said, in the first part of this work, that morally speaking it was impossible that a servant of Mary should be lost. But this must be understood with the condition, that he lives without sin, or at least that he wishes to abandon it, for then our Lady will assist him. But if any one, on the other hand, should sin, in the hope that our Lady will save him, he would by his sin render himself unworthy and incapable of the protection of Mary. The second condition is, that he perseveres in his devotion to Mary. Perseverance alone shall merit a crown, says St. Bernard: "Perseverantia sola meretur coronam."† Thomas à Kempis, when a young man, was accustomed daily to have recourse to the Virgin with certain prayers; one day he omitted them, then he

* Opusc. c. 28. † Ep. 120.

omitted them for some weeks, then he gave them up entirely. One night he saw Mary in a dream, who embraced his companions, but having come to him, said: "What do you expect, who have given up your devotions? Depart, for you are unworthy of my favors." Terrified by these words, Thomes awoke, and resumed his accustomed prayers. Richard therefore with reason says: He who is perseveringly devoted to Mary will be blessed with the hope, that all his desires may be gratified.* But as no one can be secure of this perseverance, no one can be sure of salvation before his death. It was a very remarkable document which brother John Berchmans, of the Company of Jesus, gave to his companions, when he was requested by them to leave with them in writing, what was the most pleasing devotion which they could make to our Lady, in order to obtain her protection, and he answered: Any small thing, but let it be constant: "Quidquid minimum, dum modo sit constans." Finally, however, I add here, simply and in a few words, the different devotions we may offer to our mother, to obtain for us her favor; a thing which I consider the most useful that I have written in this little work. But I do not so much recommend to my reader to practise them all, as to practise those which he selects, with perseverance, and in fear of losing the protection of the divine mother, if he neglects to continue them. Oh, how many

* Qui tenuerit Mariam perseveranter, hic beatus erit in spe, quia omnia optata ei succedent. L. 2, p. 48.

who are in hell would have been saved, if they had continued the devotions which they once commenced to Mary!

DEVOTION I.—OF THE "HAIL MARY."

This angelical salutation is very pleasing to the most holy Virgin, for it seems to renew, as it were, the joy which she experienced, when St. Gabriel announced to her that she was made mother of God; and therefore we should often salute her with the "Hail Mary." Salute her with the angelical salutation, says Thomas à Kempis, for gladly does she hear this sound.* The divine mother herself said to St. Matilda, that no one could better salute her than with the "Hail Mary." He who salutes Mary will also be saluted by her. St. Bernard heard himself once audibly saluted from a statue of the Virgin, which said to him, Hail Bernard: "Ave Bernarde."† And the salutation of Mary, says St. Bonaventure, will be some grace, whereby she always responds to those who salute her.‡ And Richard adds: If any one comes to the mother of our Lord saying, "Hail Mary," could she deny him the favor he asks?§ Mary herself promised St. Gertrude help in death for every "Hail Mary" she said. The blessed Alanus asserts, that as all heaven rejoices when

* Salutate eam angelica salutatione, quia vocem hanc audit valde libenter. Serm. 31, ad Nov.

† March. 20, Aug.

‡ Libenter nos salutat cum gratia, si libenter salutamus cum Ave Maria. Auriem. Aff. Scam. tom. 1, c. 6.

§ Si quis veniat ad matrem Domini dicens, Ave Maria, numquid poterit ei gratiam denegare?

a "Hail Mary" is said, so the devil trembles and flees: "Cœlum gaudet, Satan fugit, cum dico, Ave Maria." Which Thomas à Kempis also confirms, for a devil who once appeared to him suddenly fled at hearing the "Hail Mary."*

The practise of this devotion is:—1st. To say every morning on rising, and every evening on going to bed, three "Hail Marys," prostrate, or at least kneeling, adding at each that short prayer: "By thy pure and immaculate conception, Oh, Mary! make my body pure, and my soul holy." To ask the blessing of Mary as our mother, as St. Stanislas always did, and place ourselves under the mantle of our Lady, praying her that during the following day or night she may keep us from sin. And it is a great help to this, to keep near the bed a beautiful image of the Virgin. 2d. To say the Angelus, &c., with the three "Hail Marys," as usual, in the morning, at noon, and in the evening. John XXII. was the first Pope who attached an indulgence to this devotion, on the occasion, as Father Crasset relates,† when a criminal who was condemned to be burned, by invoking Mary on the Vigil of her Annunciation remained uninjured, even to his garments, in the midst of the flames. Benedict XIII. at length granted a hundred days, indulgence to those who recite it, and at the end of the month a plenary indulgence, having made their confession and received holy communion. Father Crasset also states that there have been other indulgences granted by Clem-

* Serm. 1, ad Nov. † To. 2, tr. 6, prat. 2.

ent X. to those who at the end of each "Hail Mary" add: Thanks be to God and Mary: "Deo gratias et Mariæ."* Formerly, at the sound of the bell, every one knelt to say the Angelus; now some are ashamed to do so; but St. Charles Borromeo was not ashamed to descend from his carriage or horse, to recite it in the street, and sometimes in the mud. It is related that a certain indolent religious, who would not kneel at the signal for the "Hail Mary," saw the belfry bow three times, and a voice spoke from it which said: Behold, thou wilt not do what even senseless creatures do. Let it be remembered, that as Benedict XIV. directed, in the Paschal season, instead of the Angelus the "Regina Cœli" is said. And from Vespers on Saturday, through the whole of Sunday, the Angelus Domini is said standing. 3d. To salute the mother of God with a "Hail Mary," every time the clock strikes. Alphonsus Rodriguez saluted Mary every hour, and in the night when the hour came, the angels awoke him, that he might not omit his devotion. 4th. On quitting or entering the house, to salute the Virgin with a "Hail Mary," that at home and abroad she may protect us from sin, and to kiss her feet as the Carthusian Fathers are accustomed to do. 5th. To pay reverence with a "Hail Mary" to every image of Mary which we meet, and let every one who can do so, place some beautiful image of the Virgin in a niche in the walls of his house, that it may

* Loc. cit.

be honored by those who are passing by. In Naples, and still more in Rome, there are very beautiful images of our Lady, by the wayside, placed there by her devout servants. 6th. The holy Church directs that the angelical salutation be prefixed to all the canonical hours of the office, and that the office should terminate with it; hence it is well, at the beginning and end of every action, always to say a "Hail Mary;" I say of every action, whether it be spiritual, as prayer, confession, communion, spiritual reading, hearing a sermon, &c., or temporal, as study, giving counsel, labor, going to table, to bed, &c. Happy are those actions that are enclosed between two "Hail Marys!" And thus also on awaking in the morning, on closing the eyes to sleep, in every temptation and peril, in every burst of anger, &., say always a "Hail Mary." My dear reader, practise this, and you will see the advantage to be drawn from it; remembering that for every "Hail Mary" there are twenty days' indulgence.* Moreover, Father Auriemma relates,† that the blessed Virgin promised St. Matilda a good death, if she recited every day three "Hail Marys" in honor of her power, wisdom, and goodness. And she also said to the blessed Jane of France, that the "Hail Mary" was very pleasing to her, especially when said ten times in honor of her ten virtues.‡ Many indulgences are also attached to these ten "Hail Marys."

* Ap. Viva. de Ind. s. ult. † Loc. cit. ‡ Ap. Maracci. p. 25.

DEVOTION II.—OF NOVENAS.

The servants of Mary are very attentive and fervent in celebrating the Novenas of her Feasts; and during these the holy Virgin, full of love, dispenses to them innumerable and special blessings. One day St. Gertrude saw under the mantle of Mary innumerable souls, whom our Lady was looking upon with great affection, and she understood them to be those who, on preceding days, had prepared themselves, by devout exercises, for the feast of the Assumption. The devotions to be used for the Novenas are the following: 1st. Mental prayer, morning and evening, with a visit to the most holy Sacrament, with the addition of an "Our Father," "Hail Mary," and "Glory be to the Father, &c.," repeated nine times. 2d. Three visits to some image of Mary, thanking the Lord for the graces granted to her, and asking of the Virgin every time some special favor; and at one of these visits the prayer which is placed at the end of each of her feasts should be read. 3d. Make many acts of love, at least one hundred, or fifty, to Mary and to Jesus, for we can do nothing more pleasing to her, as she said to St. Bridget, than to love her Son: If you wish to become dear to me, love my Son Jesus: "Si te mihi vis devincire, ama filium meum Jesum." 4th. Read every day of the Novena, for a quarter of an hour, some book which treats of her glories. 5th. Make some external mortification

of hair-cloth, discipline, &c., with fasting, or some abstinence at table from fruits or other agreeable food, at least in part; chewing also some bitter herb: and on the vigil of the feast fast on bread and water. But all this must be done always with the permission of a spiritual Father. But better than all others are the practices in these Novenas of internal mortifications, as abstaining from the indulgence of curiosity, either through the eye or the ear; remaining retired and silent; obeying, not answering with impatience; bearing contradictions, and other things of the sort, which may be used with less danger of vainglory and greater merit; and for these, too, the permission of a director is not needed. The most useful exercise is to propose, at the beginning, the amending of some fault into which we are most liable to fall. And to this end it is well, at each of the visits above named, to ask pardon for some past sin, renew the intention of avoiding it in future, and implore the help of Mary, in keeping this resolution. The honor most dear to the Virgin is the imitation of her virtues; wherefore it is well in every Novena to propose to one's self some special virtue of Mary, particularly adapted to the mystery; as for example, on the feast of the Conception, purity of intention; of her Nativity, the renewing of the spirit and the awakening from tepidity; of her Presentation, detachment from something to which we are most attached; of the Annunciation, humility in bearing

contempt, &c.; of the Visitation, charity towards the neighbor, alms-giving, &c., or at least, the praying for sinners; of the Purification, obedience to superiors; and finally, of the Assumption, the practice of detachment, and doing all things as a preparation for death, living as if every day were to be the last. In this way the Novena will prove of great service. 6th. Besides the communion on the day of the feast, it is well to ask it more frequently of the spiritual father on the days of the Novena. Father Segneri said that we cannot honor Mary better than with Jesus. For she herself, as Father Crasset relates,* revealed to a holy soul that nothing dearer could be offered to her than the holy communion, for there Jesus Christ gathers in the soul the fruit of his passion. Hence it appears that the Virgin desires nothing from her servants more than the holy communion, saying: "Come, eat the bread and drink the wine that I have prepared for you."† Finally, on the day of the feast after communion we should offer ourselves for the service of this divine mother by asking of her the grace of the virtue proposed in the Novena, or some other special favor. And it is well every year to set apart among others some feasts of the Virgin, to which we have the greatest devotion and tenderness, and make a particular preparation for this by dedicating ourselves anew, and in a more

* To. 2, tr. 6, prat. 6.
† Venite, comedite panem meum, et bibite vinum quod miscui vobis.

especial manner, to her service; choosing her for our Lady, advocate, and mother.‡ Then we should ask pardon for our negligence in her service during the past year, promising her greater fidelity for the year that is to come. In a word, let us pray her to accept us as her servants, and obtain for us a holy death.

DEVOTION III.—OF THE ROSARY AND OFFICE.

The devotion of the most holy Rosary is known to have been revealed to St. Dominic by the divine mother herself, when the saint, being in affliction, and bewailing to his Lady the conduct of the Albigensian heretics, who at that time were doing great injury to the Church, the Virgin said to her: "This earth will always be barren, until the rain falls on it." St. Dominic was then given to understand that this rain was to be the devotion of the Rosary, and that he was to publish it. And indeed the saint preached it everywhere, and this devotion was embraced by all Catholics, so that, at the present day, there is no devotion more practised by the faithful of every condition, than that of the most holy Rosary. What have not modern heretics, as Calvin, Bucer, and others said, to bring into contempt the use of the Rosary? But the great good is well known, which this noble devotion has brought to the world. How many by its means have been freed from sin!

‡ At the end of the book will be found two formulas of this dedication; one for a single person, and the other for a family.

How many led to a holy life! How many have had a good death and are now saved! Let us read the various books which treat of it; it is enough to know that this devotion has been approved by the holy Church, and the sovereign Pontiffs have attached indulgences to it. To him who recites the third part of the Rosary, the indulgence of seventy thousand years is granted, and to him who recites it entire, eighty thousand, and yet more to him who recites it in the chapel of the Rosary. Benedict XIII. at length annexed to the Rosary (for him at least who recites the third part of the Rosary which has been blessed by the Dominican Fathers) all the indulgences which are attached to the Rosaries of St. Bridget, namely, one hundred days for every "Hail Mary," and "Our Father" that is repeated. And, moreover, those who recite the Rosary gain the plenary indulgence on all the principal feasts of Mary and of the holy Church, and also of the Dominican Saints, if they visit their churches after confession and communion. But let it be remarked that this is understood of those whose names are inscribed in the book of the Rosary, to whom a plenary indulgence is also granted on the day when their names are inscribed, provided they have made their confession, and communion, and one hundred years if they wear the Rosary; and to those who make mental prayer once a day, seven years each time, and a plenary indulgence at the end of the month.

In order to gain the indulgences attached to the recitation of the Rosary, it is necessary to meditate on the mysteries which are to be found recorded in many books; but it is sufficient for those who do not know them to contemplate any one of the mysteries of the passion of Jesus Christ, as the scourging, death, &c. The Rosary must be recited with devotion; and here call to mind what the holy Virgin said to St. Eulalia, namely, that she was better pleased with five decades said with pauses and devotion, than with fifteen in haste and with less devotion. On this account it is well to say the Rosary kneeling, and before some image of Mary, and at the beginning of every decade to make an act of love to Jesus and Mary, by asking some favor. And, moreover, let it be remarked that it is more efficacious to say the Rosary in company with others, than to say it alone.

Urban II. attached many indulgences to the recitation of the little office of our Lady, which is said to have been composed by St. Peter Damian; and the holy Virgin has often made known how pleasing to her was this devotion, as we learn from Father Auriemma.* The Litanies are also very pleasing to her, and an indulgence of two hundred days is granted every time they are recited ; also the hymn, "Hail, star of the sea," "Ave Maris stella," which the divine mother ordered St. Bridget to repeat every day; and more than all, the "Magnificat," for with this we praise

* To. 1, c. 8.

her in the very words with which she praised God.

DEVOTION IV.—OF FASTING.

MANY servants of Mary, on Saturdays and the vigils of her feast, are accustomed to honor her by fasting on bread and water. It is well known that Saturday is a day dedicated by the holy Church to the honor of the Virgin, because on this day, says St. Bernard, she remained constant in the faith after the death of her Son.* For this reason the servants of Mary never fail on this day to offer her some special homage ; and particularly the fast on bread and water, as St. Charles Borromeo, Cardinal Toledo, and so many others practised it. Rittard, Bishop of Bamberg, and Father Joseph Arriaga, of the Society of Jesus, did not even taste food on Saturday. The great graces which the mother of God afterwards bestowed upon those who practised this devotion, may be read in the writings of Father Auriemma. It is sufficient for us to mention the compassion which she showed to that bandit chief, who on account of this devotion, was permitted to remain alive, although his head had been cut off, and although he was under the displeasure of God, and was enabled to make his confession before dying. He afterwards declared that the holy virgin, for this fasting which he had offered her, had preserved him in life, and he then suddenly expired.† It would not then

* Per illud triste Sabbatum stetit in fide, propterea aptissime S. Ecclesia diem Sabbati per totum anni circulum celebrare consuevit. L. 2, de Pass.

† Ap. Auriem. l. c.

be a very extraordinary thing, if any one, especially devoted to Mary, and particularly if he had already deserved hell, should offer to her this fast on Saturday. He who practises this devotion, I may say, will hardly be condemned; not that our Lady will deliver him by a miracle if he dies in mortal sin, as happened to the bandit; such prodigies of divine mercy seldom take place, and it would be madness to expect eternal salvation by them. But I do say that the divine mother will readily obtain perseverance in divine grace and a good death for him who will practise this devotion. All the brothers of our little congregation who can do so, fast on bread and water on Saturday, in honor of Mary. I say those who can do so, meaning, that if any one is prevented from doing so on account of ill health, at least on Saturday, he may content himself with one dish, make a common fast, or at least abstain from fruits or other agreeable food. It is necessary on Saturday to offer special devotions to our Lady, to receive communion, or, at least, hear mass, visit some image of the Virgin, wear hair-cloth, and the like. And at least on the vigils of the seven feasts of Mary, let her servants endeavor to offer this fasting on bread, or in any other manner they are able.

DEVOTION V.—OF VISITING THE IMAGES OF MARY.

Father Segneri says, that the devil could in no better way console himself for the losses he has sustained by the overthrow of idolatry, than

by attacking sacred images through the heretics. But the holy Church has defended them even by the blood of the martyrs; and the divine mother has also made manifest by miracles, how much she is pleased by devotion and visits to her images. The hand of St. John of Damascus was cut off because he defended with his pen the images of Mary; but our Lady restored it to him in a miraculous manner. Father Spinelli relates, that in Constantinople, every Friday after vespers, a veil which hung before the image of Mary was withdrawn of itself, and after vespers on Saturday it closed of itself. The veil before an image of the Virgin was seen to withdraw itself, in a similar way, by St. John of God, whereupon the sacristan, believing the saint to be a robber, struck him with his foot, but the foot was withered. All the servants of Mary, therefore, are accustomed often to visit her images with great devotion, and also the churches dedicated to her honor. There are, indeed, as John of Damascus teaches, the cities of refuge, where we find safety from temptations, and from the punishments merited by the sins we have committed. St. Henry, Emperor, when he entered a city, always visited, before any thing else, some church of our Lady. Father Thomas Sanchez never returned home until he had visited some church of Mary. Let us not be weary then of visiting our queen every day in some church or chapel, or in our own house, where it would be well for that purpose to have in

some retired place a little oratory, with her image adorned with drapery, flowers, tapers, or lamps, and before it also the litanies, the rosary, &c., may be said. For this purpose I have published a little book, which has already gone through eight editions, of Visits to the most Holy Sacrament, as well as to the Virgin, for every day in the month. Some devout servant of Mary might cause one of her feasts to be celebrated in some church or chapel, and preceding it by a Novena, with the exposition of the Sacrament, and also with sermons.

But here it is well to notice the fact which Father Spinelli relates in the "Miracles of the Madonna."* In the year 1611, in the celebraten sanctuary of Mary in Montevergine, it happened that on the vigil of Pentecost the people who thronged there profaned that feast with balls, excesses, and immodest conduct, when a fire was suddenly discovered bursting forth from the house of entertainment where they were feasting, so that in less than an hour and a half it was consumed, and more than one thousand five hundred persons were killed.

Five persons who remained alive affirmed upon oath, that they had seen the mother of God herself, who with two lighted torches set fire to the inn. After this I entreat the servants of Mary to abstain as far as they can, and to induce others to abstain from going to such sanctuaries of our Lady in times of feasting, for hell then received much more fruit from it, than the divine

* No. 75.

mother received honor. Let him who practises this devotion go and visit them at a time when they are not thronged.

DEVOTION VI.—OF THE SCAPULAR.

As men take pride in having others wear their livery, so the most holy Mary is pleased when her servants wear her scapular, as a mark that they have dedicated themselves to her service, and are of the number of the family of the mother of God. Modern heretics, of course, ridicule this devotion, but the holy Church has approved it by many bulls and indulgences. And Father Crasset relates,* and also Father Lezzana,† when speaking of the scapular of Mt. Carmel, that about the year 1251, the holy Virgin appeared to the blessed Simon Stock, an Englishman, and giving him her scapular, said to him that those who wore it should be saved from eternal damnation, in these words: "Receive, oh my very beloved son, this scapular of thy order, the badge of my confraternity, a privilege granted to thee and to all other carmelites ; and any one who wears this at death shall be delivered from eternal flames.‡ And Father Crasset still further relates, that Mary appeared at another time to Pope John XXII., and directed him to declare to those who wore the above-mentioned scapular, that they should be released from purgatory on the Saturday

* To. 2, tr. 6, p. 4. † In Marc. c. 5, n. 10.

‡ Accipe, fili dilectissime, hoc tui ordinis scapulare, meæ confraternitatis signum, tibi et cunctis Carmelitis privilegium; in quo quis moriens æternum non patietur incendium. Ap. Lez. l. cit.

after their death; this the same pontiff announced in his bull, which was afterwards confirmed by Alexander V., Clement VII., and others, as the above-named Father Crasset relates in the passage above cited. And as we have remarked in the first part,* Paul V. mentions the same, and appears to explain the bulls of the preceding pontiffs, prescribing in his bull the conditions to be observed in order to gain the indulgences annexed, namely, the observance of chastity according to the state of life, the recitation of the little office of the Virgin, and for him who cannot recite that, the observance, at least, of the feasts of the Church and abstinence from meat on Wednesday. Thus the indulgences that are attached to this scapular of our Lady of Mt. Carmel, as well as to the others of the dolors of Mary, of Mary of Mercy, and particularly to that of the Conception, are innumerable, daily, and plenary, in life and at the article of death. For myself, I have taken all the above-mentioned scapulars. And let it be particularly made known that, besides many particular indulgences, there are annexed to the scapular of the Immaculate Conception, which is blessed by the Theatine Fathers, all the indulgences which are granted to any religious order, pious place, or person. And particularly by reciting "Our Father," "Hail Mary," and "Glory be to the Father," six times, in honor of the most holy Trinity, and of the immaculate Mary, are gained each time all the indulgences of Rome, Portiun-

* C. 8, s. 2.

cula, Jerusalem, Galicia, which reach the number of four hundred and thirty-three plenary indulgences, besides the temporal, which are innumerable. All this is transcribed from a sheet printed by the same Theatine Fathers.

DEVOTION VII.—OF ENTERING INTO THE CONFRATERNITIES OF MARY.

Some persons disapprove of confraternities, saying that they give rise to contention, and that many persons join them for human ends. But as the Church and the sacraments are not condemned because there are many who abuse them, neither should we condemn the confraternities. The sovereign pontiffs, instead of condemning them, have approved and highly commended them, and enriched them with indulgences. St. Francis of Sales earnestly exhorts laymen to enter into the confraternities. What did not St. Charles Borromeo do to establish and multiply these sodalities? And in his synods he distinctly intimates to confessors that they should endeavor to induce their penitents to join them.* And with reason, for these confraternities, especially those of our Lady, are like so many arks of Noe, in which the poor people of the world may find refuge from the deluge of temptations and sins which inundate them in it. We will learn in the course of our missions the utility of these confraternities. Speaking exactly, there are found more sins in a man who does

* Confessor pro viribus suadebit, ut alicui societati pœnitentes adscribantur. Act. Med. to. 1, c. 6, 58.

not belong to the confraternities than in twenty who frequent them. The confraternity may be said to be the tower of David : "The tower of David, a thousand bucklers hang upon it, all the armor of valiant men."* And this is the cause of the good obtained from the confraternities, namely, that their members acquire in them many defences against hell ; and they make use in them of many means to preserve themselves in divine grace which it is very difficult for persons in the world, who are not in confraternities, to practise.

In the first place, one of the means of salvation is meditating on eternal truths: "Remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin."† And so many are lost because they do not think of it: "With desolation is all the land made desolate, because there is none that considereth in the heart." ‡ But those who belong to the confraternity are led to think by the many meditations, readings, and sermons that are made there. My sheep hear my voice: "Oves meæ vocem meam audiunt." § Secondly, In order to be saved it is necessary to commend one's self to God: Ask, and you shall receive: "Petite, et accipietis."‖ And the brothers of the confraternities do this continually; and God hears them more graciously, because he has himself said, that he will willingly grant great graces

* Turris David, mille clypei pendent ex ea, omnis armatura fortium. Cant. iv. 4.

† Memorare novissima tua, et in æternum non peccabis. Eccli. vii. 40.

‡ Desolatione desolata est omnis terra, quia nullus est qui recogitet corde. Jer. xii. 11.

§ Joan. x. 27.

‖ Joan. xvi. 24.

to prayers made in common: "If two of you shall agree upon earth concerning any thing, whatsoever they shall ask, it shall be done for them by my Father who is in heaven."* Concerning which St. Ambrose says: Many who are small, if they unite together become great; and the prayers of many cannot but be heard.† In the third place, in the confraternity the sacraments are more frequently approached, on account of the rules, as well as on account of the example of other members. And by this means perseverance in divine grace is more easily obtained; the holy Council of Trent having declared the communion to be: "An antidote by which we are freed from daily sins, and are preserved from mortal sins."‡ Fourthly, Besides the sacraments in the sodalities, there are practised many exercises of mortification, humility, and charity towards infirm and poor members; and it would be well if in every confraternity were introduced the holy custom of assisting the infirm poor of the country. It would be a still greater advantage if there could be introduced into them, in honor of the divine mother, the *secret sodality* of more fervent members. I will here enumerate the exercises that are usually practised in these. 1. Half an hour of reading. 2. Vespers and complin of the Holy Spirit are said. 3. The litanies

* Si duo ex vobis consenserint super terram, de omni re, quamcumque petierint, fiet illis a Patre meo. Matth. xviii. 19.

† Multi minimi, dum congregantur unanimes, fiunt magni; et multorum preces impossibile est non audiri.

‡ Tamquam antidotum quo liberemur a culpis quotidianis, et a peccatis mortalibus præservemur. Sess. 13, c. 2.

or the Virgin are repeated, and then some brothers who are designated, practise mortifications by bearing the cross upon their shoulders, or others of a similar kind. 4. For one quarter of an hour a meditation is made on the passion of Jesus Christ. 5. Each one accuses himself of any violation against the rules of which he has been guilty, and receives penance for it from the father of the congregation. 6. The little flowers of mortification made during the past week are read by one of the brothers who is selected, and then the Novenas to be said are announced, &c. Finally, the discipline is made for the space of a Miserere and a Salve, and every one kisses the feet of the crucifix which is at the foot of the altar. The rules, then, would be for each brother: 1. To make a meditation every day. 2. A visit to the most holy Sacrament and to the blessed Virgin. 3. In the evening an examination of conscience. 4. Spiritual reading. 5. To avoid games and the conversation of the world. 6. To frequent the communion and practise some mortification of the chain, discipline, &c. 7. To recommend every day to God the souls in purgatory, and sinners. 8. If any brother is sick, to visit him. But let us return to our subject. In the fifth place: It has already been said how much more sure is our salvation if we serve the mother of God; and do not the brothers serve her in the congregation? How much do they praise her there! How many prayers do they offer up to

her! There they consecrate themselves from the beginning to her service, choosing her, in an especial manner, for their Lady and mother; and they are inscribed in the book of the children of Mary; hence as they are distinguished servants and children of the Virgin, she therefore treats them with distinction, and protects them in life and in death. Thus a brother of the confraternity may say that, with the confraternity, he has received every blessing: Now all good things come to me together with her: "Venerunt mihi omnia bona pariter cum illa." *

Every brother should pay particular attention to two things. First, as to the end; that is, to enter the confraternity for no other end but to serve God and his holy Mother, and save his own soul. 2. Not to leave the congregation on the appointed days, for affairs of the world, since there the most important business in the world is to be transacted, namely, eternal salvation. Endeavor also to draw as many as you can to the confraternity, and especially to induce those brothers who have left it to return to it again. Oh, what terrible punishments has our Lord caused those to suffer who have abandoned the confraternity of our Lady! In Naples a certain brother left the congregation, and being exhorted to return, he said: I will return when my legs are broken and my head cut off. And he was a prophet: for very soon after his legs were broken and his head cut off by some of his enemies.† On the other hand, the

* Sap. vii. 11. † Ap. Sarn. d. Congr. p. 1.

members who persevere are favored by Mary with spiritual and temporal good: All her domestics are clothed with double garments: "Omnes domestici ejus vestiti sunt duplicibus." * We may read in Father Auriemma † the special graces granted by Mary to the brothers of the confraternity in life and in death, but especially in death. Father Crasset relates ‡ that in 1586 there was a youth who, being near death, fell asleep; but afterwards awakening, he said to his confessor: "Oh Father, I have been in great danger of hell, but my Lady has rescued me. The devils have presented my sins before the tribunal of the Lord, and already they were dragging me to hell, but the holy Virgin came and said to them: 'Where are you taking this youth? What have you to do with one of my servants who has so long served me in the congregation?' The devils fled, and thus I have been saved from their hands." The same author relates soon after that another brother of the congregation, also at the point of death, had a great conflict with hell; but he conquered, and full of joy, exclaimed: "Oh, what blessings come from serving the blessed mother well in her confraternity!" And thus entirely consoled, he died. He afterwards adds that the Duke of Popoli being on his death-bed, said to his son; "My son, know that the little good I have done in life I owe to the congregation; and therefore I have no greater good to leave thee than the confraternity of Mary. I am

* Prov. xxxi. 21. † To. 2, c. 4. ‡ To. 2, pr. 5.

more proud of having been a bro: :r of the congregation than the Duke of Popo "

DEVOTION VIII.—OF ALMS IN HONOR F MARY.

THE servants of Mary are accustomed, especially on Saturday, to give alms in honor of the divine mother. That holy shoemaker called St. Deusdedit (God gave), as St. Gregory relates in his Dialogues, dispensed to the poor on Saturday all that he earned during the week. And another holy soul saw in a vision a sumptuous palace which God was preparing in heaven for this servant of Mary, in the building of which nothing was done except on Saturday. St. Gerard never refused anything that was asked him in the name of Mary. Father Martin Guttierez, of the Society of Jesus, did the same, and he confessed that he had never asked a favor from Mary that he had not received it. And this servant of hers having been slain by the Huguenots, the divine mother appeared to his companions, accompanied by some virgins, whom she directed to wrap the body in a sheet and carry it away.* St. Eberard of Salisbury practised the same devotion, and on this account a holy monk saw him, in the form of a child, in the arms of Mary, who said: "This is my Son Eberard, who never has refused me any thing."† Alexander de Hales practised the same who, having been requested by a lay-brother of St. Francis, in the name of Mary, to become a Franciscan, left the world and en-

* Ap. P. Pepe. to. 5, Lez. 235, in fin.

† Hic est filius meus Eberardus, qui nihil mihi unquam negavit.

tered into the order.* Let not the servants of the Virgin then be weary of giving daily some little alms in her honor, and increase it every Saturday. And if they can do nothing else, at least for love of Mary, perform some other act of charity, as visiting the sick, praying for sinners and for the souls in purgatory, &c. Works of mercy are very pleasing to this mother of mercy.

DEVOTION IX.—OF FREQUENT RECOURSE TO MARY.

Of all devotions, none is so pleasing to our mother, as recurring often to her intercession, by asking help of her in all special necessities, as in taking or giving counsel, in dangers, afflictions, and temptations, particularly in temptations against purity. The divine mother will certainly deliver us if we have recourse to her with the Antiphon: We fly to thy patronage: "Sub tuum præsidium," etc, or with a "Hail Mary," or only invoking the most holy name of Mary, which has particular power against demons. The blessed St. Francis, in a temptation against purity, had recourse to Mary, and she immediately appeared to him, and placing her hand upon his breast, delivered him. It is useful to kiss or press the rosary, or the scapular, or even to look on some image of the Virgin. And be it known that Benedict XIII. granted fifty days' indulgence to those who pronounce the name of Jesus and Mary.

* P. Auriem. to. 1, c. 12.

TENTH AND LAST DEVOTION.

I UNITE in this various practices of devotion in honor of Mary. 1. To celebrate, or cause to be celebrated, or at least to hear Mass in honor of the holy Virgin. It is true that the holy sacrifice of the Mass can be offered only to God, to whom it is offered principally in acknowledgment of his supreme dominion; but as the sacred Council of Trent declares,* this does not prevent it from being offered to God in gratitude for the graces bestowed on the saints and his most holy mother, and in commemoration of them, that they may deign to intercede for us. And therefore it is said in the Mass: "That it may avail to their honor, but to our salvation."† This offering of the Mass, as also the repeating three "Our Fathers," "Hail Marys," and "Glories" to the most holy Trinity, in gratitude for the graces granted to Mary, she herself revealed to a soul, were very pleasing to her; for the Virgin not being able fully to thank the Lord for all the favors bestowed on her, is pleased when her children help her to thank God. 2d. To reverence the saints who are most closely united to Mary, as St. Joseph, St. Joachim, and St. Ann. The Virgin herself recommended to a nobleman the devotion to St. Ann her mother.‡ And we should also honor the saints who had the most special devotion to the divine mother, as St. John

* Sess. 22, c. 3.

† Ut illis proficiat ad honorem, nobis autem ad salutem.

‡ 1. Barry, Pa. A.

the Evangelist, St. John the Baptist, St. Bernard, St. John of Damascus, the defender of her images, St. Ildephonsus, the defender of her virginity, &c. 3d. To read every day some book which treats of the glories of Mary. To preach, or at least recommend to all, particularly to one's relatives, devotion to the divine mother. The Virgin one day said to St. Bridget: "Make thy children my children." To pray daily for the living and dead who were most devoted to Mary.

Let us here enumerate many other indulgences granted by the Pontiffs to those who, in various ways, honor this queen of heaven: 1st. To those who say: "Blessed be the holy and immaculate conception of the blessed Virgin Mary," an indulgence of one hundred years is granted; and when after the word "immaculate," the word "most pure" is added, according to Father Crasset, other indulgences are granted, applicable to the souls in purgatory. 2d. For the "Salve Regina," forty days. 3d. Litanies, two hundred days. 4th. To those who bow the head at the names of Jesus and of Mary, twenty days. 5th. To those who repeat five "Our Fathers" and "Hail Marys" in honor of the passion of Jesus and the dolors of Mary, ten thousand years. And for the convenience of devout souls, I will here mention other indulgences, attached by the Sovereign Pontiffs to other devotions: 1st. To him who hears Mass, three thousand eight hundred years. 2d. Benedict XIV. granted seven

years' indulgence to those who make the Christian acts, with the intention of receiving in life and in death the holy sacraments; and if they are continued for a month, plenary indulgence applicable to the souls in purgatory, or to themselves at the article of death. 3d. To those who recite fifteen "Our Fathers" and "Hail Marys," for sinners, remission of the third part of their sins. 4th. Pope Benedict XIV. has granted more indulgences to those who make mental prayer for half an hour every day, and plenary once a month, after confession and communion. 5th. To those who recite the prayer: Soul of Christ, "Anima Christi," etc., three hundred days. 6. Those who accompany the viaticum, obtain five years' indulgence, and with lights seven years; and those who cannot do this, if they accompany it reciting an "Our Father" and "Hail Mary," one hundred days. 7th. Those who kneel before the most holy Sacrament, gain two hundred days. 8th. Those who kiss the cross, one year and forty days. Those who bow the head at the "Glory be to the Father," thirty days. 9th. To priests who before Mass recite: I wish to celebrate Mass, &., "Ego volo celebrare missam," etc., fifty days are granted. 10th. To those who kiss the regular scapular, five years. Other indulgences may be found in the works of Father Viva.* Let every one endeavor, when seeking the above-named indulgences, to make an act of contrition, that he may be in a disposition to gain them.

* Append. Indulg. in calce Trut, s. ult.

I omit other devotions, which are to be found in other books, as the seven joys, the twelve privileges of Mary, and the like, and let us terminate this work with the beautiful words of St. Bernardine:* Oh woman, blessed among all women, thou art the honor of the human race, the salvation of our people. Thou hast a merit that has no limits, and an entire power over all creatures. Thou art the mother of God, the mistress of the world, the queen of heaven. Thou art the dispenser of all graces, the glory of the holy Church. Thou art the example of the just, the consolation of the saints, and the source of our salvation. Thou art the joy of paradise, the gate of heaven, the glory of God. Behold, we have published thy praises. We supplicate thee then, oh mother of mercy, to strengthen our weakness, to pardon our boldness, to accept our service, to bless our labors, and impress thy love upon the hearts of all, that after having honored and loved thy Son on earth, we may praise and bless him eternally in heaven. Amen.

And with this, my dear reader and brother, lover of our mother Mary, I leave you, saying to you, continue joyfully to honor and love this good Lady; endeavor also to promote the love of her wherever you can, and do not doubt, but securely trust that if you persevere in true devotion to Mary, even until death, your salvation will be certain. I finish, not because I have nothing more to say of the glories of this great

* Serm. 2.

queen, but that I may not weary you. The little that I have written may indeed be enough to charm you with this great treasure of devotion to the mother of God, with which she will correspond with her powerful patronage. Accept, then, the desire I have had by this my work, to see you safe and holy, to see you become a loving and ardently devoted child of this most amiable queen. And if you know that this book of mine has aided you somewhat, I pray you of your charity recommend me to Mary and ask of her the grace that I ask for you, namely, that we may both meet in paradise at her feet, together with all her other dear children.

And last of all, I turn to thee, oh mother of my Lord, and my mother Mary. I pray thee to accept these my poor labors, and the desire I have had to see thee praised and loved by all. Thou knowest how much I have desired to complete this my little work on thy glories, before my life, which is now drawing to a close, should end. I now say that I die content, leaving on the earth this book of mine, which will continue to praise and to preach thee, as I have endeavored always to do in these years since my conversion, which through thee I have obtained from God. Oh immaculate Mary, I recommend to thee all those who love thee, and especially those who will read this my book; and most especially those who will exercise the charity of recommending me to thee; oh Lady, give them persever-

ance, make them all saints, and thus bring us all to praise thee together in heaven. Oh, my most sweet mother, it is true that I am a poor sinner, but I glory in loving thee, and I hope great things from thee, among others, that I may die loving thee. I hope in the sufferings of my death, when the devil will place my sins before me, that first the passion of Jesus, and next, thy intercession, may give me comfort to quit this miserable life in the grace of God, to come to love him and thank thee, oh my mother, through all eternity. Amen. Thus I hope, thus may it be.

Oh Lady, say for us to thy Son : "They have no wine." How bright and clear is the intoxicating cup of this wine ! The love of God inebriates us even to contempt of the world ; it warms and strengthens, renders us insensible to temporal things, and inclined to heavenly things.*

Thou art a fruitful field, full of virtues, full of graces. Thou didst come forth as a bright and ruddy dawn ; for original sin being destroyed in the womb of thy mother, thou wast born bright in the knowledge of truth, and ruddy with the love of virtue ; no enemy has power against thee, for a thousand bucklers hang upon thee, all the armor of the valiant men ; for there is no virtue which does not shine in thee, and thou in thy-

* Domina dic pro nobis filio tuo, vinum non habent. Calix hujus vini inebrians quam præclarus est! Inebriat amor Dei ad contemptum mundi; calefacit, facit fortes, somnolentes ad temporalia, et ad invisibilia promptos. S. Bern. aut quisquis est auctor in Salv. Reg. Serm. 4.

self dost possess all that belongs to every saint.†

Oh our Lady, our mediatrix, our advocate, commend us to thy Son. Oh blessed one, obtain by the grace which thou didst merit, that he who, through thy means has deigned to become a partaker of our infirmity and misery, thou also interceding, may make us partakers of his blessedness and glory.*

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

† Tu es ager plenus, plena virtutum, plena gratiarum. Tu processisti ut aurora lucida, et rubicunda; quia superatis originalibus peccatis in utero matris, nata es lucida cognitione veritatis, et rubicunda amore virtutis; nihil omnino immicus proficit in te, eo quod mille clypei pependerunt ex te, omnis armatura fortium; nihil est enim virtutis quod ex te non resplendeat, et quicquid singuli habuere sancti, tu sola possedisti. Ibid.

* O Domina nostra, mediatrix nostra, advocata nostra, tu filio nos commenda. Fac, o benedicta, per gratiam quam meruisti, ut qui, te mediante, dignatus est fieri particeps nostræ infirmitatis et miseriæ, te quoque intercedente, participes nos faciat beatitudinis et gloriæ suæ. Ibid.

VARIOUS ADDITIONAL EXAMPLES

APPERTAINING TO

THE MOST HOLY MARY.

MEDITATIONS FOR VARIOUS FESTIVALS, AND DIFFERENT DEVOTIONS IN HER HONOR.

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VARIOUS ADDITIONAL EXAMPLES

APPERTAINING TO THE MOST HOLY MARY.

Some persons, boasting of being free from prejudices, take great credit to themselves for believing no miracles but those recorded in the holy Scriptures, esteeming all others as tales and fables for foolish women. But it will be well to repeat here a just remark of the learned and pious Father John Crasset,* who says that the bad are as ready to deride miracles as the good are to believe them; adding, that as it is a weakness to give credit to all things, so, on the other hand, to reject miracles which come to us attested by grave and pious men, either savors of infidelity, which supposes them impossible to God, or of presumption, which refuses belief to such a class of authors. We give credit to aTacitus and a Suetonius, and can we deny it without presumption to Christian authors of learning and probity? There is less risk, says Father Canisius, in believing and receiving what is related with some probability by honest persons, and not rejected by the learned, and which serves for the edification of our neighbor, than in rejecting it with a disdainful and presumptuous spirit.†

1ST EXAMPLE.—A certain man in Germany

* To. 2, tr. 6, prat. 20. † L. 3, de Deip. c. 18.

had committed a great sin, and was ashamed to confess it, yet on the other hand he could not endure the remorse which he felt, and went to cast himself into the river; but just as he was on the point of doing so, he stopped, and bursting into tears, prayed God to pardon him without confession. One night in his sleep he felt some one waking him, and heard a voice saying: Go and make your confession. He went to the church, but yet did not make his confession. He heard the same voice a second night; again he went to the church, but after he had entered it, said that he would rather die than confess that sin. He was about to return home, when he thought he would go and recommend himself to the most holy Mary, before her image which was in the church. He had hardly kneeled before it, when he felt himself entirely changed. He immediately arose, called for a confessor, and weeping bitterly, through grace received from the Virgin, made a sincere confession; and he afterwards said that he felt greater satisfaction than if he had gained all the gold in the world.*

2.—A young nobleman was reading one day, while at sea, an obscene book, in which he took great pleasure. A religious said to him: "Now come, would you give something to our Lady?" "Yes," he answered; and the other said, "I wish that, for love of the holy Virgin, you would tear that book in pieces and cast it into the sea." "Here it is, Father," said the young man. "No,"

* Annal. Soc. 1650, Ap. Auriem. Aff. Scamb. t. 3, c. 7.

said the religious, "I wish that you yourself would make this offering to Mary." He did so, and when he returned to Genoa, his native place, the mother of God so inflamed his heart with the love of God that he became a religious.*

3.—A hermit of Mount Olivet had in his cell a holy image of Mary, and frequently offered up prayers before it. The devil could not endure such devotion to the holy Virgin, and tormented him continually with temptations against purity; and the poor old hermit finding himself still pursued by them, notwithstanding all his prayers and mortifications, said one day to the enemy: "What have I done to you, that you will not leave me in peace?" And the demon appeared to him and answered: "You torment me more than I torment you;" and then he added: "Now come, and swear secrecy to me, and I will tell you what you must cease to do, if you wish me not to molest you any more." The hermit took the oath, and then the devil said to him: "I wish you never again to approach that image that you have in your cell." The hermit was greatly perplexed, and went to take counsel of the Abbot Theodore, who told him that he was not bound by his oath, and that he must not cease to recommend himself to Mary before that image, as he had done before. The hermit obeyed, and the devil was put to shame and conquered.†

4.—A woman who had been guilty of a criminal connection with two young men, one of

* Ann. Marian. 1505. † Bonif. Hist. Virg. c. 6.

whom had killed the other, came one day in great terror to Father Onefrio d'Anna, a pious missionary in the kingdom of Naples, to make her confession. She told the Father that in the same hour in which that wretched youth had died, he appeared to her, clothed in black, loaded with chains, and cast fire on every side. He had a sword in his hand, and raised it to cut her throat. In terror she exclaimed: "What have I done to you, that you wish to kill me?" And in a rage he answered: "Wretch, do you ask what you have done to me? You have caused me to lose God." Then she invoked the blessed Virgin; and that spectre, on hearing the most holy name of Mary pronounced, disappeared and was seen no more.*

5.—When St. Dominic was preaching at Carcassone, in France, an Albigensian heretic, who was possessed by demons, was brought to him, because he had publicly spoken against the devotion of the most holy Rosary. The saint then ordered the demons, in the name of God, to declare whether those things which he had said concerning the most holy Rosary were true; and howling with rage they said: "Hear, oh Christians, all that this our enemy has said of Mary and of the most holy Rosary is entirely true." They added, moreover, that they had no power against the servants of Mary; and that many who at death invoked Mary were saved, contrary to their deserts. And finally they said: "We are constrained to declare, that

* In Vit. p. Aut. de Collel. c. 32, s. 5.

no one is lost who perseveres in devotion to Mary, and in the devotion of the most holy Rosary, for Mary obtains for sinners a true repentance before death. St. Dominic made the people immediately repeat the Rosary; and, oh miracle! at every "Hail Mary," many devils went out from that wretched man, in the shape of burning coals, so that when the Rosary was finished, he was entirely freed from them, and many heretics became converted.*

6.—The daughter of a certain prince had entered a monastery, where the discipline was so relaxed, that, although she was a young person of good dispositions, she advanced but little in virtue. By the advice of a good confessor, she began to say the Rosary with the mysteries, and became so changed that she was an example to all. The other religious, taking offence at her for withdrawing from them, attacked her on all sides, to induce her to abandon her newly-begun way of life. One day while she was repeating the Rosary, and praying Mary to assist her in that persecution, she saw a letter fall from above. On the outside were written these words: "Mary, mother of God, to her daughter Jane, greeting;" and within: "My dear child, continue to say my Rosary; withdraw from intercourse with those who do not help you to live well; beware of idleness and vanity; take from thy cell two superfluous things, and I will be your protectress with God." The abbot of that monastery soon after visited it, and attempted to reform it, but he did

* Pacciuch. in Sal. Ang. Exc. 4, No. 10.

not succeed ; and one day he saw a great number of demons entering the cells of all the nuns except that of Jane, for the divine mother, before whose image he saw her praying, banished them from that. When he heard from her of the devotion of the Rosary which she practised, and the letter she had received, he ordered all the others to repeat it, and it is related that this monastery became a paradise.*

7.—There lived in Rome a woman, called Catherine the beautiful, who led a very sinful life. Hearing St. Dominic once preach on the devotion of the most holy Rosary, she had her name inscribed in the book of the confraternity, and began to recite it, but did not abandon her sinful life. One evening a youth, apparently a noble, came to her house, whom she received courteously. When they were at supper, she saw drops of blood falling from his hands while he was breaking a peace of bread, and then she observed that all the food he took was tinged with blood. She asked him what that blood meant? And the youth answered, that a Christian should take no food that was not tinged with the blood of Jesus Christ, seasoned with the memory of his passion. Amazed at this, she asked him who he was. "Soon," he answered, "I will show you;" and when they had withdrawn into another apartment, the appearance of the youth changed, and he showed himself crowned with thorns, his flesh torn, and said to her: 'Do you wish to know who I am? Do you not know me? I am thy

* Bonif. l. 4, c. 4, ex. B. Alan. etc.

Redeemer. Catherine, when will you cease to offend me? See how much I have suffered for you. You have grieved me enough, change your life." Catherine began to weep bitterly, and Jesus, encouraging her, said: "Now begin to love me as much as you have offended me; and know that you have received this grace from me, on account of the Rosary you have been accustomed to recite in honor of my mother." And then he disappeared. Catherine went in the morning to make her confession to St. Dominic; and giving to the poor all she possessed, led so holy a life, that she attained to great perfection. The Virgin often appeared to her; and Jesus himself revealed to St. Dominic, that this penitent had become very dear to him.*

8.—The blessed Alanus relates of a lady, named Dominica, who was accustomed to recite the Rosary, that she gave up this devotion, and afterwards became so poor, that in desperation she stabbed herself in three different places. But just as she was breathing her last, and the devils came to take her to hell, the most holy Mary appeared to her, and said to her: "My daughter, you have forgotten me, but I have not been willing to forget you, on account of that Rosary which you have for a time recited in my honor. And now," she added, "if you will continue to recite it, I will restore life to you, and also the possessions you have lost." Dominica was restored to health, and continuing the practice of reciting the Rosary, recovered

* Diotall. to. 2, Dom. 2, Quinquag

her possessions, and at her death was again visited by Mary, who commended her fidelity, and she died a holy death.*

9.—There lived in Saragossa a certain noble, a very bad man; his name was Peter, and he was a relation of St. Dominic. One day when the saint was preaching, he saw Peter enter the church, and he prayed the Lord that he would make known to the audience the condition of that miserable sinner. And, behold, Peter then appeared like a monster from hell, surrounded and dragged along by many devils. The congregation fled, even his wife who was in the church, and the servants who accompanied him. Then St. Dominic directed him, through one of his companions, to recommend himself to Mary, and to begin to recite the Rosary which he sent him. Peter received the message, humbled himself, sent to thank the saint, and received himself the grace to see the demons that surrounded him. He afterwards went to make his confession to the saint himself, from whom he received the assurance that he was already pardoned, and continuing to recite the Rosary, he attained to so happy a state that one day the Lord made him appear in church, in the presence of the whole congregation crowned with three crowns of roses.†

10.—In the mountains of Trent lived a notor-

* Ap. Auriem. to. 2. c. 11.

† Cartag. to. 4, l. ult. s. 114. Let any one who wishes for other examples of the power of the Rosary, read those at the end of the first vol. of the above-mentioned work, pages, 68, 92, 133, 262, 302.

ious robber, who, when he was one day admonished by a religious to change his course of life, answered, that for him there was no remedy. "Do not say so," said the religious; "do what I tell you; fast on Saturday in honor of Mary, and on that day do no harm to any one, and she will obtain for you the grace of not dying under the displeasure of God." The obedient robber followed this advice, and made a vow to continue to do so. That he might not break it, he from that time went unarmed on Saturdays. It happened that on a Saturday he was found by the officers of justice, and that he might not break his oath, he allowed himself to be taken without resistance. The judge, when he saw that he was a gray-haired old man, wished to pardon him; but, through the grace of compunction which he had received from Mary, he said that he wished to die in punishment of his sins. He also made a public confession of all the sins of his life in that same judgment-hall, weeping so bitterly that all present wept with him. He was beheaded, and buried with but little ceremony, in a grave dug near by. But afterwards the mother of God appeared, with four holy virgins, who took the dead body from that place, wrapped it in a rich cloth embroidered with gold, and bore it themselves to the gate of the city; there the blessed Virgin said to the guards: "Tell the bishop from me, to give an honorable burial, in such a church, to this dead person, for he was my faithful servant." And this was

done. All the people of the place thronged to the spot, where they found the corpse with the rich pall, and the bier on which it was placed. And from that time, says Cesarius, all persons in that region began to fast on Saturdays.*

11.—A devout servant of Mary, who lived in Portugal, fasted on bread and water every Saturday of his life, in honor of Mary, and chose for his advocates with the blessed Virgin, St. Michael and St. John the Evangelist. At the hour of his death the queen of heaven appeared to him, with those saints, who were praying for him, and the holy Virgin, looking upon her servant with a joyful countenance, said to those saints: "I will not depart hence without taking this soul with me."

12.—In one of our missions, after the sermon on Mary which it is our custom to preach, a very old man came to one of the Fathers of our congregation, to make his confession. He was full of consolation, and said: "Our Lady has done me a favor." "And what favor has she done you?" asked the confessor. "For thirty-five years, Father, I have made sacrilegious confessions, because I was ashamed of one sin, and yet I have passed through many dangers, and have been several times at the point of death, and if I had died then I certainly should have been lost; and now our Lady has done me the favor to touch my heart;" and when he said this he wept so bitterly, that he seemed to be all tenderness. After the Father had heard his confes-

* Theoph. Rayu. de S. Lacr. c. 15.

sion, he asked him what devotion he had practised, and he answered that he had never failed on Saturday to keep a strict fast in honor of Mary, and therefore the Virgin had taken pity on him, and he gave the Father permission to publish the fact in his sermons.

13.—In the country of Normandy a certain robber was beheaded, and his head was thrown into a trench; but afterwards it was heard crying: "Mary, give me confession." A priest went to him and heard his confession; and questioning him as to his practices of devotion, the robber answered that he had no other except that of fasting one day of the week in honor of the holy Virgin, and that for this our Lady had obtained for him the grace to be delivered from hell by that confession.*

14.—There were two young noblemen living in the city of Madrid who encouraged each other in their sinful life. One of them saw one night, in a dream, his companion seized by some Moors and carried to the shore of a stormy sea. They were about to do the same with him, but he had recourse to Mary, and made a vow that he would become a religious at once, and thus he was rescued from these Moors; then he saw Jesus seated on a throne, and as if in anger, and the holy Virgin supplicating and obtaining mercy for him. When his friend came to visit him he related to him the vision, but he laughed at it; and shortly after was stabbed with a poniard and died. When the other youth saw

* Cantiprat. l. 3, c. 19, p. 18.

the vision verified he made his confession, and was strengthened in his resolution of becoming a religious. In view of that, he sold all that he had, but instead of giving the money to the poor, as he had intended, he expended it in debauchery. He afterwards fell ill, and had another vision; he thought he saw hell opened and the divine Judge in the act of condemning him. Again he had recourse to Mary, and Mary again delivered him. He was restored to health and led a worse life than before. He went to Lima, in South America, where he fell ill, and in the hospital of that place was again touched by the grace of God. He confessed to Father Francis Perlino, a Jesuit, to whom he promised to change his life, but went back to his evil courses. At length the same Father, visiting one day another hospital in a distant place, saw that wretched man extended on the earth, and heard him exclaim: "Ah, I am lost; and for my greater torment this Father has come here to witness my punishment. I came here from Lima, and am brought to this end by my vices, and now I am going to hell." With these words on his lips he died, before the Father had time to give him any assistance.*

15.—There was once in Germany a certain criminal condemned to death; but he was obstinate and refused to make his confession, though a Jesuit father did his utmost to convert him. He entreated him, he wept, he cast himself at his feet; but seeing that all was in

* Bovio esempio di. S. S. Verg. to. 3, Es. 9.

vain, he finally said: "Let us recite a 'Hail Mary.'" No sooner had the criminal recited it than he began to cry bitterly, made his confession with much compunction, and wished to die clasping the image of Mary.*

16.—In a city of Spain there lived a sinful man who had given himself to the devil, and had never been to confession. He did nothing good but say a "Hail Mary" every day. Father Eusebius Nierembergh relates, that when this man was at the point of death the most holy Virgin appeared to him in a dream and looked on him; her kind eyes so changed him that he immediately sent for a confessor, made his confession with a voice broken by sobs, made a vow to become a religious if he should live, and then died.†

17.—A devout servant of Mary always inculcated it upon her daughter that she should often recite the "Hail Mary," especially when she was in any danger. One day when this girl was resting after a ball, she was attacked by a demon, who in a visible form, bore her off with him. He had already seized her, but she began "Hail Mary," and the enemy disappeared.‡

18.—A woman of Cologne who had criminal intercourse with an ecclesiastic, found him one day hanging in her room dead. After this she entered into a monastery, where the devil assailed her in a bodily form, so that she knew not what to do in order to be delivered from him. A companion suggested to her to say the "Hail

* Ann. Marian. 1618.
† Appr. Auriem. to. 1, c. 7
‡ Bovio. to. 5, Es. 7.

Mary;" and when she did so the demon said: "Accursed may she be who has taught thee this," and appeared no more.*

19.—A certain baron who led a very sinful life was accidentally visited in his castle by a religious, who, enlightened by God, begged him to assemble together all his servants. They all came except the chamberlain. He at last was forced to come in, and the Father said to him: "Now, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to tell who you are." And he answered: "I am a devil from hell, who for fourteen years have served this villain, waiting until some day he should omit those seven "Hail Marys" which he is in the habit of reciting, that I might then strangle him and take him to the flames of hell." The religious then commanded the devil to depart. He obeyed, and disappeared. The baron then threw himself at his feet, was converted, and led a holy life.†

20.—The blessed Francis Patrizii, who greatly loved the devotion of the "Hail Marys," recited five hundred every day. Mary made known to him the hour of his death. He died as a saint; and after forty years a most beautiful lily sprung from his mouth, which was then transported into France, and on the leaves of it was written the "Hail Mary," in letters of gold.‡

21.—Cesarius relates that a Cistercian lay-brother could say no other prayer but the "Hail

* Cesar. l. 8, c. 33.
† Spec. Ex. B. num. 69, et Crass. to. 2, tr. 6, pr. 1.
‡ Bolland. 15, Maji.

Mary," and recited it continually with the greatest devotion. After his death there sprung up from the place where he was buried a tree, on whose leaves were written these words: Hail Mary, full of grace: "Ave Maria, gratia plena."*

22.—Three devout virgins, by the advice of their confessor, recited one year, for forty days, the whole Rosary, as a preparation for the feast of the purification of Mary. On the vigil the divine mother appeared to the first of these three sisters with a rich garment, embroidered with gold, thanked her, and blessed her. Then she appeared to the second with a simple garment, and also thanked her. But she said to her: "Oh Lady, why have you brought my sister a richer garment?" "Because she has clothed me," said Mary, "more richly than you have done." She afterwards appeared to the third with a canvas garment, and she at once asked pardon for her tepidity in honoring her. The next year all three fervently prepared for the same feast, saying the Rosary with great devotion, when behold, on the evening preceding the festival, Mary appeared to them in glory, and said to them: "Be prepared, for to-morrow you shall come to paradise." And, in fact, the next day they went to church, related to the confessor what had occurred, and received communion in the morning. At the hour of complin they saw again the most holy Virgin, who came to take them with her, and amid the songs of

* Ap. Crass. to. 2, tr. 6, p. 1.

angels, one after the other sweetly expired.*

23.—Father Crasset relates, that a certain military officer told him, that after a battle he found a soldier on the battle-ground who held in his hand a Rosary and the scapular of Mary, and asked for a confessor. His forehead had been pierced by a musket-ball, which had passed through the head and came out behind, so that the brain was visible and protruded through each opening, and he could not live without a miracle. He however raised himself, made his confession to the chaplain with great compunction, and after receiving absolution, expired.†

24.—The same author adds, that this very captain told him of being present when a trumpeter of his company received a pistol-shot from some one near, and when he examined his breast where he said that he had been hit, he found that the ball had been stopped by the scapular of the Virgin, which the man wore, and that it had not even touched the flesh. He took it and exhibited it to the whole company.‡

25.—A noble youth, named Eschylus, being sent by the prince his Father to Hildesheim, a city of Saxony, to study, abandoned himself to a dissolute life. He fell ill, and was near dying, and while in that state he had a vision. He saw himself shut up in a furnace of fire, and believed himself to be already in hell; and then he escaped from it through a hole and took refuge in a great place, where he found the most holy Mary

* Tesoro del Rosar. l. 4, Mir. 17, Diotall. to. 1, Agg. Es. 7.
† Crass. to. 2, tr. 6, pr. 14. ‡ Crass. loc. cit.

in the hall, and she said to him: "Rash man, dost thou dare to appear before me? Depart from here and go to the flames which thou dost merit." The young man besought the Virgin to have mercy on him, and then turned to some persons who were near, and implored them to recommend him to Mary. They did so, and the divine mother answered: "You do not know the sinful life he has led, and that he had not even thought of saying a 'Hail Mary' in my honor." But his advocates answered: "Oh Lady, he will change his life;" and the youth added: "Yes, I promise really to amend, and I will be thy servant." Then the Virgin's anger was appeased, and she said to him: "Well, I accept thy promise, be faithful to me, and meanwhile with my blessing, be delivered from hell and death." When she had said this, the Virgin disappeared. Eschylus came to himself, and blessing Mary, related to others the grace he had received. He led ever after a holy life, always preserving a great affection towards the blessed Virgin, and was made Archbishop of the Church of Lude, in Denmark, where he converted many to the faith. Towards the close of his life, being old, he resigned the archbishopric and became a monk of Clairvaux, where he lived four years, and died a holy death. Hence he has been numbered by some writers among the saints of the Cistercian order.*

26.—A member of the brothers of the confraternity of Mary was invited one morning by

* Ann. Cisterc. an. 1151, c. 5, et Bov. to. 5, Es. 6.

a friend to dine with him. He promised to go but went first to the meeting of the confraternity, and after that he forgot his promise. His friend was so much offended by this, that one day when he met him he attempted to kill him; but, by a just judgment of God, he killed himself. His friend was immediately taken before the court, found guilty of the murder, and was condemned to death. He recommended himself to the Virgin, and, inspired by her, begged to be led into the presence of the dead body, and then asked him how he had died. He confessed that he died by his own hands, and his friend was set at liberty.*

27.—In the year 1604, at Dola, a member of the same confraternity was very ill. On a feast-day he said to himself: "At this hour my brothers are assembled and occupied in praising Mary, and am I here"? He rose from his bed and went to the assembly, when suddenly the fever left him, and he was restored to health.†

28.—A fisherman, belonging to the same confraternity in Naples, had been ill for several days through the severe discipline he had practised in the meeting of the confraternity. Being somewhat better, as he was poor and had a family, he returned to his fishing, saying to the most holy Virgin: "Oh, my Lady, for thee I have suffered this evil, do thou help me;" and our blessed Lady allowed him to take as many fish as he would have taken in all the time he had lost.‡

* V. P. Aur. to. 2, ex. c. 4. † Auriem. to. 2, c. 6. ‡ Aur. c. 5.

29.—Another member was going to be imprisoned for debt; he recommended himself to Mary, and the most holy Virgin inspired his creditors to release him from his debt, and so they did.*

30.—A young man who had been a member of the confraternity of the Virgin, left it, and abandoned himself to a dissolute life. One night the devil appeared to him in a frightful form. He began to invoke the blessed Virgin. "In vain," said his enemy to him, "do you invoke her whom you have abandoned; your sins have made thee mine." The youth in terror fell on his knees, and began to recite the formula of the brothers: "Oh most holy Virgin mother," &c. Then the mother of God appeared to him, at whose presence the demon fled, leaving behind him a great stench, and an opening in the wall. And Mary then turned to the youth, and said: "Thou didst not merit my help, but I wish to take pity on thee, that thou mayest change, and return to the confraternity." †

31.—In Braganza there lived another youth who left the confraternity and abandoned himself to such vicious courses, that one day in despair, he was going to throw himself into a river. But first he turned to our Lady and said: "Oh Mary, I have served thee in the confraternity, wilt thou help me?" The most holy Virgin appeared to him and said: "What art thou doing? Dost thou wish to destroy both soul and body? Go, make thy confession, and return to the con-

* Ann. Congr. an. 1598. † Leonero. Sodal. Parth. l. 3, c. 8.

fraternity." The youth, encouraged by this, thanked the Virgin, and amended his life.‡

32.—There was once a religious in Spain, who in a fit of passion killed his superior. After committing this crime he fled into Barbary, where he renounced his faith and married, leading afterwards so bad a life that he did nothing good but say a "Hail, oh Queen," daily. One day, being alone, he repeated this devotion, and behold Mary appeared to him, rebuked him, and encouraged him to amend his life, promising him her assistance. He then returned to his house, and was so sorrowful that his wife questioned him as to the cause, and he in tears told her his condition, and the vision he had seen. She took compassion on him, gave him money to enable him to return to his own country, and also consented that he should take one of their children with him. He returned to the monastery, where he shed so many tears of compunction that he was again received, together with his son. He persevered in his holy life, and died with the reputation of a saint.*

33.—A pupil had been instructed by his master to salute the most holy Virgin in these words: "Hail, oh mother of mercy." When he was at the point of death Mary appeared to him, and said: "My son, do you not know me? I am that mother of mercy whom you have saluted so many times." Then this servant of the Virgin extended his arms as if to follow her, and gently breathed his last.†

*Ann. Soc. 1550. † Auriem. to. 2, c. 7. ‡ Ibid.

34.—There was once a sinner who was so abandoned, that he practised no other devotion than that of reciting daily To thy patronage: "Sub tuum præsidium." The Virgin one day so greatly enlightened him, that he abandoned his sins, entered religion, led for fifty years an exemplary life, and thus died.*

35.—In the year 1610, there lived in Turin an obstinate heretic, who even on his death-bed would not be converted by all that was said to him by the various priests who were with him for eight successive days. At length one of them, almost by force, brought him to have recourse to Mary, with these words: Mother of Jesus, help me: "Mater Jesu, assiste mihi." And the heretic, as if awakened from sleep, exclaimed, "I will die a Catholic;" and indeed he became reconciled to the Church, and died in two hours.†

36.—Another infidel, who was living in India, was about to die, abandoned by all, but as he had heard the Christians so much extol the power of Mary, he had recourse to her, and the blessed Virgin appeared to him, and said: "Behold I am she whom you invoke; become a Christian." He was immediately restored to health, and baptized, and many were converted by the prodigy.‡

37.—There lived in Madrid, in the year 1610, a very devout servant of Mary, who had an especial devotion to an image of her called "Mary of Antioch." He married a woman, who through suspicion and jealousy left him no rest. Every

* Ann. Marian. 19 Jul. † Barri. Par. ap. c. 2.
‡ Patr. Menol. 18 Settembre.

Saturday he went barefoot, and early in the morning, to visit that image; but his wife, who suspected him of going elsewhere, once in particular, attacked him so violently, that blinded by impatience, he took a rope and hung himself. But just as his soul was departing, when he could no more help himself, he invoked the help of Mary; and behold a most beautiful lady appeared, who approached him and cut the rope. The people without saw this, and then he narrated the fact. By this the wife was so filled with compunction, that ever afterwards they lived in peace, and devoted to the divine mother.*

38.—Another person, of Valentia, in 1613, committed a great crime, which he was ashamed to confess, and therefore made sacrilegious confessions. But, being troubled with great remorse of conscience, he went one day to visit the altar of Our Lady of Halle, that he might obtain relief. When he arrived at the door of the church, which stood open, he felt himself thrust back by an invisible power. Then he determined to make his confession, and immediately entered. After making a general confession, he went home entirely consoled.†

39.—The blessed Adam, a Cistercian, went one evening to visit an altar of the most blessed Virgin in a church; but finding the doors closed, he knelt outside to make his devotions. He was hardly on his knees when he saw the door opening of itself, and he entered. There he beheld

* Andrado del Battes. di. n. Don. e il. P. Rho. Sab. Es. 71.
† An. Soc. ap. Auriem. to. 2, c. 1.

the Queen of Heaven, in the midst of great splendor, and she said to him: "Adam, approach; do you know who I am?" Adam answered: "No, Lady; who art thou?" "I am," she said, "the mother of God. Know, that as a reward for thy devotion to me, I will always take care of thee." And then she placed her blessed hand upon his head, and cured him of the great pain he was suffering there.*

40.—A servant of Mary went one day to visit a church of our blessed Lady, without the knowledge of her husband, and she was prevented by a severe storm from returning that night to her own house. She felt a great fear lest her husband should be very angry with her; but she recommended herself to Mary, and when she returned home, her husband was very kind and gracious to her. Upon questioning him, she found that the evening before, the divine mother had taken her form, and attended to all the little affairs of the household like a servant. She then related the occurrence to her husband, and they both afterwards practised great devotion to the blessed Virgin.†

41.—A certain cavalier, of the city of Doul, in France, named Ansaldo, received in the battle a wound from an arrow, which entered so deep into the jaw-bone, that it was not possible to extract the iron. After four years of suffering, the afflicted man could endure the pain no longer, and being besides very ill, he thought he would again try to have the iron extracted. He

* Chronic. Cisterc. † Chron. Min. 104, l. 5, c. 25.

recommended himself to the blessed Virgin, and made a vow to visit every year a sacred image of her which was in that place, and make an offering of a certain sum of money upon her altar if she granted this request. He had no sooner made the vow then the iron, without being touched, fell into his mouth. The next day, ill as he was, he went to visit the image, and scarcely had he placed the promised gift upon the altar, when he felt himself entirely restored to health.*

42.—There was once a Spaniard who held sinful intercourse with a relative. A devout virgin, while she was at prayer, saw Jesus on his throne, who was on the point of sending that criminal to hell ; but his holy mother obtained thirty days' grace for him, because he once had honored her. By the command of the divine mother herself, his female companion told the whole to her confessor, who made it known to the young man, and he at once made his confession, with many tears and promises of amendment. But because he did not remove the temptation from him, he fell again into sin, went again to confession, again made a resolution, and again relapsed. As he did not go to see the Father again, the Father went to his house to find him, but was very rudely dismissed. The last of the thirty days had arrived, the Father went to the house again, but in vain ; he desired the servant, however, to give him notice if there was any accident ; and indeed at night that miserable sinner

* Chron. Dul. to. 1, del Labbeo. e il P. Rho. es. 27.

was attacked with violent pains. The Father was called, and endeavored to relieve him, but the unhappy man exclaimed: "My heart has been pierced with a lance, and I am dying. Then giving a groan of despair, he expired.*

43.— There lived once in Milan a man named Masaccio, so addicted to gambling, that one day he lost at play the very clothes he wore. In a violent rage at his loss, he took a knife and struck an image of the blessed Virgin, and blood burst forth from it into his face. He was so much moved that he burst into tears, and offered thanks to the Virgin that she had obtained for him time for repentance. He afterwards entered a Cistercian monastery, and led such a holy life that he even received the gift of prophecy; after being forty years a religious, he died a holy death.†

44.—A very sinful man, once kneeling in tears at the foot of the cross, prayed that he might receive a sign of pardon. But when he found that his prayer was not granted, he turned to an image of the sorrowful Mary, who then appeared to him, and he saw her present his tears to her Son, saying: My Son, shall these tears be lost? "Fili, istæ lacrymæ peribunt?" And then he was given to understand that Christ had already pardoned him, and from that time he led a holy life.‡

45.—A man of advanced age, during one of our missions, after the usual sermon on the pow-

* P. Andrad. l. 2. Imit. della. V. c. 23.
† P. Rho. Sab. Es 42. ‡ P. Sinisc. Mart. de Mar. Cons. 38

erful intercession of Mary, which it is our custom always to preach in the missions, came to make his confession to one of our Fathers, named D. Cesar Sportelli, who lately died in the fame of sanctity, and was found uncorrupted many months after his death. Kneeling at the feet of his confessor, he said: "Father, our Lady has had pity on me." "This is her office," answered the Father. "But you cannot give me absolution," said the other, "for I have never made my confession." And, in fact, although he was a Catholic, he had never made his confession. The Father encouraged him, heard his confession, and gave him absolution with great consolation.

46.—The blessed Bernard Tolomeo, founder of the Olivetan Fathers, who, from his childhood, had a great devotion to Mary, was one day greatly tormented in his hermitage at Accona, called Mt. Olivet, with the fear that he should not be saved, and that God had not yet pardoned him; but the divine mother appeared to him, and said: "What do you fear, my son? Take courage; God has already pardoned you, and is pleased with the life you lead; go on, and I will help and save you." The blessed religious continued to lead a holy life till he died a happy death in the arms of Mary.*

47.—There lived in Germany a young girl, called Agnes, who had been guilty of incest in the first degree. She fled into a desert, and there gave birth to a child. The devil, in the form

* In Vita. B. Bern. Tolom.

of a religious, appeared to her, and persuaded her to throw the child into a pond. But afterwards, when he proposed to her to throw herself in also, she said: "Mary, help me," and the devil disappeared.*

48.—A soldier once made a compact with the devil, that he would sell his wife to him for a certain sum of money. He was taking her to a wood to fulfil his promise, when he passed before a church dedicated to the Virgin. His wife begged him to allow her to pay her devotion to Mary in that church; but as she entered it, Mary came forth from it, and taking the form of the woman, accompanied the husband. When they reached the wood, the demon said to the man: "Traitor, why have you brought me, instead of your wife, my enemy, the mother of God?" "And thou," said Mary, "how hast thou dared to think of injuring my servant? Go, flee to hell." And then turning to the man, she said: "Amend your life, and I will aid you." She disappeared, and that wretched man repented, and amended his life.†

49.—A very sinful woman who lived in Messico, having fallen ill, repented of her life, and made a vow to Mary, that if she would restore her to health she would present her with her hair. She was cured, and she cut off her hair, making an offering of it to the statue of the Virgin. But the woman again fell into sin, again fell ill, and died impenitent. Then

* Spec. Ex. V. B. Maria, Ex. 10.
† Giac. di Vorag. in Fest. Ass. et Spec. Ex. 31.

Mary one day afterwards spoke from that statue to Father Giammaria Salvaterra, and said: Take those locks from my head, for they belong to a lost and sinful soul, and are not befitting the head of the mother of purity. The Father obeyed her, and threw them himself instantly into the flames.*

50.—A Saracen, named Petran, made captive several Christians in Spain, who recommended themselves to the holy Virgin. Mary appeared to the Saracen, and said to him: "Petran, how dare you to hold my servants slaves? Release them immediately—obey." And the Moor answered: "Who are you whom I am to obey?" "I am," said she, "the mother of God; and because they have had recourse to me, I wish you to give them their liberty." Then the heart of Petran was changed, he set the Christians free, and presented himself to the Virgin. She first instructed him, and then she herself baptized him in a fountain, near which a church was built, and a Benedictine monastery.†

51.—A certain canon, while he was repeating some devotions in honor of the divine mother, fell into the river Seine and was drowned, and being in mortal sin, the devils came to take him to hell. But Mary appeared at the same time, and said to them: "How have you dared to take possession of one who died praising me?" Then turning to the sinner, she said: "Repent," and be particularly devout to my Conception.‡

* Patrign. Men. 8 lug. † Eus. Nier. Troph. Mar. l. 2, c. 14.

He was restored to life, became a religious, and never ceased to thank his deliverer, and everywhere to propagate the devotion to her immaculate Conception.*

52.—Whilst the monks of Clairvaux were reaping in the fields, and praising the queen of heaven, most holy Mary was seen caressing them, and two other saints wiping their sweat.*

53.—The brother of the King of Hungary recited every day the office of Mary. Once when he was very ill, he made a vow of chastity to the Virgin, if she would restore him to health: and he immediately recovered. But his brother having died, he was about to be married, and just as the nuptials were to be celebrated, he retired apart to recite his accustomed office. When he came to the words: Thou art fair and comely, &c. : "Quam pulchra es et decora," &c., he saw Mary, who said to him: "If I am fair as you say, why do you leave me for another spouse? Know, that if you leave her, you shall have me for a spouse, and the kingdom of heaven instead of the kingdom of Hungary." After this the prince withdrew into a desert near Aquileia, where he lived a holy life.†

54.—St. John Climacus relates, that there was a devout religious, named Carcerio, who was accustomed often to repeat little songs in praise of Mary, and always saluted her images with a "Hail Mary." He was once afflicted with so painful a malady, that in the paroxysms of his

* Job. Clictov. in Serm. Conc.
† Spec. Ex. verb. Laborare. Ex. 7.
‡ S. Ans. in ep. ap. Auriem. to. 1, c. 8.

suffering he bit his lips and tongue. He lost his speech, and was at the point of death. Whilst the religious were recommending his soul to God, the mother of God appeared to him and said: "I have come to cure thee, for I do not wish that mouth should suffer with which thou hast so often praised me. Arise, thou art healed, continue to praise me. Having said this, she sprinkled him with some drops of her milk, and immediately he was cured, and never ceased to praise her, until, visited again by his Lady at his death, he sweetly expired in her arms.*

55.—When St. Francis Borgia was in Rome, an ecclesiastic came to speak with him; but the saint being much occupied, sent Father Acosta to him. The ecclesiastic said to him: "Father, I am a priest and a preacher, but I live in sin, and distrust the divine mercy. After preaching a sermon one day against the obstinate, who afterwards despair of pardon, a person came to me to make his confession, who narrated to me all my sins, and at length told me that he despaired of the divine mercy. In order to do my duty, I told him that he must change his life, and trust in God; then that penitent rose to his feet and reproached me, saying: 'And you, who preach thus to others, why do you not amend, and why do you distrust? Know,' said he, 'that I am an angel come to your aid; amend and you will be pardoned.' And when he had said this he disappeared. I abstained for several days from my sinful practices, but when

* Prato. Fior. l. 3, Es. 105.

temptation came I again returned to my sins. On another day, as I was celebrating Mass, Jesus Christ sensibly spoke to me from the host, and said: 'Why dost thou thus maltreat me, when I treat thee so well?' After this I resolved to amend, but at the next temptation fell again into sin. A few hours ago, a youth came to me in my apartment, and drew from under his mantle a chalice, and from this a consecrated host, saying: 'Do you know this Lord whom I hold in my hand? Do you remember how many favors he has done you? Now behold the punishment of your ingratitude,' and saying this he drew a sword to kill me. I then cried: 'For the love of Mary do not kill me, for I will indeed amend.' And then he said: 'This was the only thing that could save you: make a good use of this grace, for this is the last mercy for you.' When he had said this he left me, and I came immediately here, praying you to receive me among you." Father Acosta consoled him, and the priest, by the advice also of St. Francis, entered another order of strict observance, where he persevered in holiness till his death.*

56.—In the year 1228, while a priest was celebrating Mass on a Saturday, in honor of the most holy Mary, some Albigensian heretics came and cruelly cut out his tongue. In this condition he went to the monastery of Cluny, where the good religious received him with much charity, greatly compassionating the suffering he endured from the loss of his tongue. But

* Andr. nel suo Itin. Grad. 7, ap. Bov. to. 4, Esemp. 5.

what caused the greatest suffering to this devout priest was, that he could no longer say Mass and recite the divine office, and that of the blessed Virgin, as he had been accustomed to do. The feast of Epiphany having arrived, he begged to be carried into the church, and before the altar of the holy Virgin prayed her to restore the tongue which he had lost through love of her, that he might sing her praises as he did before. Then Mary appeared to him with a tongue in her hand, and said to him: "Since thou hast lost the tongue for the faith, and for the honor thou hast paid me, I give thee in return a new one." Having said this, with her own hands she placed the tongue in his mouth, and immediately the priest, raising his voice, recited the "Hail Mary." The religious quickly assembled, and the priest wished to remain with them, and to become himself a religious, that there he might always praise his benefactress. The mark of the scar was always seen on his tongue.*

57.—It was in 589 that the famous plague prevailed in Rome, when men were attacked with sneezing, and fell down dead. St. Gregory the Great, when he was carrying in procession through the city an image belonging to the church of St. Mary Major, in the place now called the Castle of St. Angelo, saw an angel in the air, who was replacing in its scabbard a sword dripping with blood. Then he heard the angels singing: Oh, Queen of heaven rejoice, Alleluia; for he whom thou didst deserve to bear, Alleluia, is risen again,

* Cæsarius. l. 7, Dial. c. 24.

as he said, Alleluia: "Regina cœli, lætare, Alleluia; quia quem meruisti portare Alleluia; resurrexit, sicut dixit, Alleluia." And St. Gregory responded: "Ora pro nobis Deum, Alleluia." Immediately the plague ceased, and they then began to celebrate the greater Litanies every year on the 25th of April.*

58.—A city of France, called Avignon, was once besieged by enemies. The citizens prayed to Mary to defend them, and placed an image of her which they had taken from the church, at the gate of the city. One of the citizens having concealed himself behind the image, a soldier shot an arrow at him, saying: "This image shall not save you from death." But the image presented her knee, and the arrow remained fixed in it, and may be seen there even to this day ; and thus she saved the life of her servant. And the enemy, moved by this prodigy, raised the siege.†

59.—There was in Naples a Moor, a slave of Don Octavius del Monaco, who, although he had often been exhorted to leave his Mahometan sect, remained obstinate, but yet never failed every evening to keep lighted, at his own expense, a lamp before an image of Mary which was in the house. And he said: "I hope that this Lady will grant me some great favor." One night the blessed Virgin appeared to him and told him he must become a Christian. Still the Turk resisted, but she placed her hand upon his shoulder, and said to him: "Now no longer resist,

* Sigon de Reb. It. ap. Diotall. to. 2, in fin. Ex. 4.
† Discep. Promt. Ex. 83.

Abel; be baptized and called Joseph." In the morning he immediately went to be instructed, and was baptized August 10th, 1648, with eleven other Turks. Let it be observed that when the divine mother appeared to him, after she had converted him, she was about to depart, but the Moor seized her mantle, saying : "Oh Lady, when I find myself afflicted, I pray thee to let me see thee." In fact she one day promised him this, and when he was in affliction he invoked her, and Mary appeared again to him, saying : "Have patience," and he was consoled.*

60.—A certain parish priest of Asella, named Baldwin, became a Dominican, and when he was in his novitiate there came to him the temptation that he could do greater good in the world in his parish, and he resolved to return. But going to take his leave of the altar of the Rosary, Mary appeared to him with two vessels of wine ; she gave him to drink of the first, but the novice had hardly tasted it, when he turned away his mouth, for although the wine was good, yet it was full of dregs ; the second he pronounced good, and free from dregs : "Now," said the most holy Virgin, "there is the same difference between the life in the world, and the life in religion, which is under obedience." Baldwin persevered, and died a good religious.†

61.—Another novice, also overcome by temptation, was about to leave his monastery, but stopping to say a "Hail Mary" before an image

* P. Allozza. Ciel. Stell. di Mar. l. 3, c. 5, Es. 60.
† Chron. Ord. ap. Aur. to. 2, c. 6.

of the Virgin, he felt himself nailed, as it were, to the floor, from which he could not rise. He repented, and made a vow of persevering. He then recovered his liberty, asked pardon of the master of novices, and persevered.*

62.—The blessed Clement, a Franciscan, one morning delayed going to the common table, that he might stop and recite certain accustomed devotions to the most holy Virgin; but she spoke from her image, and directed him to go with the others, because obedience pleased her more than all other devotions.†

63.—Whilst Angela, a daughter of the King of Bohemia, was in a monastery, Mary appeared to her, and an angel said to her: "Arise, Angela, and fly to Jerusalem, for thy father wishes to give thee in marriage to the prince of Hungary." The devout virgin immediately set on her journey, and again the divine mother appeared to her and encouraged her to continue her journey. She was received in Jerusalem among the Carmelites, and afterwards was commanded by the blessed Virgin herself to return to her own country, where she lived a holy life till her death.‡

64.—St. Gregory relates that there was a young woman named Musa, who had great devotion to the mother of God; but being, through the evil example of her companions, in danger of losing her innocence, one day Mary appeared to her with many saints, and said to her: "Musa,

* Aur. to. 2, c. 6. † Ann. Min. ap. Aur. to. 1, c. 4.
‡ P. Rho. Sab. della B. l. Es. 75.

do you too wish to be one of these?" Musa answered, "Yes;" and Mary added: "Withdraw from your companions, and prepare, for in one month from this you shall come with me." Musa retired from her companions, and related the vision. On the thirtieth day she was at the point of death, and the most holy Virgin again appeared to her and called her. She answered: "Behold, Lady, I come," and sweetly expired.*

65.—Anna Caterina Gonzaga was married to Ferdinand I., Archduke of Austria, but her husband dying, she entered the religious order of the Servites, and had a crown made, on the globes of which were carved the dolors of the Virgin. She said that for this crown she renounced all the other crowns of earth; and, in fact, refused marriage with the Emperor Rodolph II. When she heard that her younger sister had been crowned empress, she said: "Let my sister enjoy her imperial crown; for these garments with which Mary my queen has clothed me, are to me a thousand-fold dearer." The most holy Virgin appeared to her many times during her life, and at last this good religious died a holy death.†

66.—A young clerical student playing one day at ball with other young men, and fearing he should lose a ring in his play, which had been given him by a lady, he placed it on the finger of an image of Mary which was near; and he immediately felt impelled to make a promise to the Virgin to quit the world and choose her for his spouse. He made the promise, and Mary

* St. Greg. l. 4. Dial. c. 17. † Jos. Mar. Barchius, in Vita.

pressed his finger in token that she accepted it. But after some time he wished to marry another, and Mary appeared to him and reproached him for his infidelity; wherefore he fled into a desert and led to the last a holy life.*

67.—About the year 850, Berengarius, Bishop of Verdun, in Lorraine, having entered a church where a certain priest named Bernerio was saying the office of Mary prostrate before the choir, stumbled against him, and in his vexation struck him with his foot. In the night the most holy Virgin appeared to him, and said: "How is it that you struck with your foot my servant who was engaged in praising me? Because I love you, "she added, "you must pay the penalty." Then his leg became withered, but he lived and died a saint; and after many years his body, except that leg, remained uncorrupted.†

68.—A young man who was left wealthy at the death of his parents, by play and dissipation with his friends, lost all that he had, but always preserved his chastity. An uncle, who found him reduced to such poverty by his vices, exhorted him to say every day a part of the Rosary, promising him that if he would persevere in this devotion he would procure for him a good marriage. The youth persevered, and having amended his life, he was married. On the evening of his nuptials he rose from the table to go and recite his Rosary, and when he had finished it, Mary appeared to him and said: "Now I will reward thee for the honor thou hast paid me: I do

* Spec. Ex. verb. B. Virg. Ex. 8. † Chron. Verdun. ap. P. Rho.

not wish that thou shouldst lose thy chastity; in three days thou shalt die, and shalt come to me in paradise." And this really happened, for immediately a fever attacked him. He related the vision, and on the third day died in perfect peace.*

69.—The devout author of the book in honor of the most holy Rosary, entitled, "The Secret of every Grace," relates that St. Vincent Ferrer once said to a man dying in despair: "Why will you ruin yourself when Jesus Christ wishes to save you?" And he answered, that in spite of Christ he would be damned. The saint replied: "And you, in spite of yourself, shall be saved." He began to recite the Rosary with the persons of the house, and behold, the sick man asked to make his confession, made it weeping, and then died.

70.—The same author also relates that a poor woman, who was buried by an earthquake under the ruins of a house, was found alive and uninjured, with her children in her arms, by some persons who were employed by a priest to remove the stones. When she was asked what devotion she had practised, she said she had never failed to say the Rosary and visit a chapel of the most holy Mary.

71.—He also relates that another woman who led a wicked life because she thought it the only means by which she could gain a livelihood, was counselled to recommend herself to Mary by saying the Rosary; she did so, and behold one night

* Cantip. l. 2, c. 29, p. 6.

the divine mother appeared and said to her: "Quit your sinful life: as for your support, trust in me, and I will think of that." The next morning she went to confession, and Mary most holy provided for her wants.

72.—A person of impure life who had not the courage to quit his sins, began to say the Rosary, and was delivered from his vices.

73.—Another person who maintained a sinful friendship was seized with abhorrence of his sin by saying the Rosary. He yielded again to temptation, but by means of the Rosary finally freed himself from it.

74.—A good priest who was attending a woman on her death-bed, who bitterly hated her husband, not knowing by what means to convert her, withdrew to say the Rosary, and at the last moment that woman saw her sinfulness, repented, and forgave her husband.

75.—Finally, the same author relates, that once making a mission to the convicts in the galleys of Naples, he found some who obstinately refused to make their confession. He suggested to them that at least they should have themselves enrolled in the confraternity of the Rosary, and begin to recite it. They consented to do so, and they had no sooner recited one than they desired to make their confession, and did so, the first time for many years. These modern examples serve to revive our confidence in Mary, seeing that she is at the present time the same that she always has been towards those who have recourse to her.

76.—St. Gregory relates that a holy prelate, Bishop of Ferento, was from childhood devoted to relieving the poor. It happened one day that a certain priest, his nephew, sold a horse for ten crowns of gold, and took the money and locked it up. The bishop not having any thing to give when some poor persons came to beg of him, broke open the chest and distributed the money to them. His nephew made such a disturbance when he discovered it, that the holy prelate, not knowing what to do, went for help to a church dedicated to Mary. When behold, he saw ten crowns lying on the drapery of the statue; he took them and gave them to his nephew.*

77.—A Lutheran lady of Augsburg in Germany, who was a very obstinate heretic, happening to pass one day a small Catholic chapel, went in through curiosity. She saw there an image of Mary with the infant Jesus in her arms, and felt moved to make an offering to it. She accordingly went home, took a silk cloth, and brought it to the altar of the Virgin. When she had returned home the most holy Virgin enlightened her to see the errors of her sect, and she went immediately to seek some Catholics, abjured heresy, and was converted to God.†

78.—In the city of Cesena there lived two very bad men who were friends. One of them, named Bartholomew, in the midst of all his vices practised the devotion of reciting every day the "Stabat Mater" in honor of the sorrowful Mary. Once when he was repeating this hymn

* S. Gregor. Dial. l. 1, c. 9. † An. Soc, 1656, ap. Aur. to. 2, c. 6.

Bartholomew had a vision, in which he seemed to stand with his sinful companion in a lake of fire, and saw the most holy Virgin, moved to pity, offer her hand and take him from the flames. She directed him to seek pardon from Jesus Christ, who showed himself willing to pardon him through the prayers of his mother. The vision ended, and Bartholomew at the moment heard the intelligence that his friend had been mortally wounded and was dead. Then he knew the truth of the vision, and quitting the world, entered the order of Capuchins, where he led a most austere life, and died in the fame of sanctity.*

79.—The blessed Jerome, founder of the Sommaschian Fathers, being governor of a certain place, was taken by the enemy, and confined in the dungeon of a tower. He recommended himself to Mary, and made a vow to make a pilgrimage to Treviso in her honor, if she would rescue him. Then the most holy Virgin appeared to him surrounded by a great light, and with her own hands loosed his chains, and gave him the keys of the prison. He fled from the prison, and, setting out for Treviso to fulfil his vow, he found himself immediately surrounded by the enemy. Again he had recourse to his deliverer, and she again appeared to him, took him by the hand, and led him safely through the midst of his enemies, accompanying him even to the gates of Treviso, where she disappeared. He made the visit, deposited his

* P. Sinisc. Mart. di Mar. Cons. 15.

chains at the foot of the altar of Mary, and then devoted himself to a holy life, by which he has merited recently to be ranked by the holy Church among the number of the blessed.*

80.—A priest who had a special devotion to the sorrows of Mary, often remained alone in a chapel to commiserate the dolors of his Lady, and, moved by compassion, was accustomed with a little cloth to wipe, as it were, the tears of a statue of the sorrowful Virgin which was in that place. Now this good priest, in a severe illness, when he was given up by his physicians, and was going to breathe his last, saw a beautiful lady by his side, who consoled him with her words, and with a handkerchief gently wiped the sweat from his brow, and with this cured him. When he found himself well, he said: "But, my Lady, who art thou who dost practise such charity towards me?" "I am she," answered Mary, "whose tears thou hast so often dried," and she disappeared.†

81.—A noble lady, who had an only son, was informed one day that he was killed, and that his murderer had by chance taken refuge in her own palace; but when she called to mind that Mary pardoned the executioners of her Son, she wished also to pardon that criminal for love of the sorrowful Mary; and not only did she pardon him, but provided him with a horse, money, and clothes, that he might make his escape. Then her son appeared to her, and told her that he was saved, and that for her generous act

* In Vita. † Cantiprat. l. Apum. ap. Sin. Cons. 9.

done towards his enemy, the divine mother had delivered him from purgatory, where he should otherwise have had to suffer for a long time, but that he was then already entering paradise.*

82.—The blessed Bionda performed a similar heroic act. Some enemies also killed her only son, though he was innocent, solely by reason of the hatred they bore to his father, who was dead; and with unheard-of cruelty gave the heart of the murdered youth to his mother to eat. Now she, according to the example of the most holy Mary, began to pray for her murderers, and to do them all the good she could. These acts so pleased the divine mother, that she called her to join the third order of the Servites, where she merited to lead so holy a life, that both before and after her death many miracles were wrought through her.†

83.—St. Thomas of Canterbury, when he was a young man, found himself one day in conversation with several other youths, each of whom boasted of some foolish love affair. The holy youth declared that he, too, loved a great lady, and was beloved by her, meaning the most holy Virgin. Afterwards, he felt some remorse at having made this boast; but behold, Mary appeared to him in his trouble, and with a gracious sweetness said to him: "Thomas, what do you fear? You had reason to say that you loved me, and that you are beloved by me. Assure your companions of this, and as a pledge of the

* P. Tausc. de SS. Mar. del. l. 2, c. 26.
† Ann. Ord. Serv. Cen. 2, l. 4, c. 13.

love I bear you, show them this gift that I make you." The gift was a small box, containing a chasuble, of a blood-red color, as a sign that Mary, for the love she bore him, had obtained for him the grace to be a priest and a martyr, which indeed happened, for he was first made priest and afterwards Bishop of Canterbury, in England, where he was at one time persecuted by the king, and fled to the Cistercian monastery, at Pontignac, in France. While he was there, wishing one day to mend his hair-cloth shirt that he usually wore, which was ripped, and not being able to do it well, his beloved queen appeared to him, and, with especial kindness, took the hair-cloth from his hand, and repaired it as it should be done. After this he returned to Canterbury, and died a martyr, having been put to death on account of his zeal for the Church.*

84.—A young woman in the Papal States, who was very devout towards Mary, met in a certain place a chief of banditti. Fearing some outrage, she implored him, for love of the most holy Virgin, not to molest her. "Do not fear," he answered, "for you have prayed me in the name of the mother of God; and I only ask you to recommend me to her." And, in fact, he accompanied her himself along the road to a place of safety. The following night Mary appeared in a dream to the bandit, and thanking him for the act she had performed for love of her, told him she would remember it, and would one day

* In Vita et ap. Bov. to. 4, Ex. 36.

reward him. The robber, at length, was arrested, and condemned to death; but behold, the night previous to his execution, the blessed Virgin visited him again in a dream, and first asked him: "Do you know who I am?" He answered, "It seems to me I have seen you before." "I am the Virgin Mary," she continued, "who have come to reward you for what you have done for me. You will die to-morrow, but you will die with so much contrition that you will come at once to paradise." The convict awoke, and felt such contrition for his sins that he began to weep bitterly, all the while giving thanks aloud to our blessed Lady. He sent immediately for a confessor, to whom he made his confession with many tears, relating the vision he had seen, and begged him to make public this grace that had been bestowed on him by Mary. He went joyfully to execution, after which, as it is related, his countenance was so peaceful and happy, that all who saw him believed that the promise of the divine mother was fulfilled.*

85.—The blessed Joachim Piccolomini, who had a very great devotion to Mary, even from childhood, used to visit three times a day an image of the sorrowful mother, which was in a neighboring church, and abstained from all food on Saturday in her honor. Moreover, he rose at midnight to meditate upon her dolors. But let us see how Mary rewarded him. At first she appeared to him when he was young, and directed him to enter into religion in the order

* P. Recup. de Sign. Fruct. Sign. 12.

of her Servants, which he did. Towards the close of his life, she again appeared to him, with two crowns in her hand : one of rubies, as the reward of the compassion he had cherished for her sorrows; and the other of pearls, as the reward of his chastity which he had consecrated to her. Finally, at death she appeared to him again, when he asked of her the favor to die on the day on which Jesus Christ died, and the most holy Virgin consoled him by telling him : "Make ready now, for to-morrow (Friday) you will die suddenly, as you desire, and to-morrow you shall be with me in paradise." And thus it happened, for while they were chanting in the church the passion according to St. John, at the words : There stood near the cross of Jesus his mother : "Stabat juxta crucem Jesu mater ejus," he was attacked with the faintness of death ; at the words : And bowing his head he gave up the ghost : "Et inclinato capite tradidit spiritum," this blessed one also gave up his spirit to God ; and at the same moment the church was filled with a great splendor, and a most sweet fragrance.*

86.—Father Alphonso Salmerone, of the Society of Jesus, being a most devout servant of the blessed Virgin, died saying : "To pardise, to paradise; blessed be the hour that I have served Mary ! Blessed the sermons, the toils, the thoughts that I have had for thee, oh my Lady ! To paradise."†

87.—A youth named Guido, who wished to

* Rossign. Pieta Osseg. † In Vita.

join the order of Camaldoli, was presented to St. Romuald by the prince, his father, whose name was Farnulf. The holy founder received him with pleasure. One day Mary appeared to this good youth, her servant, with the infant Jesus in her arms. Esteeming himself unworthy of such a favor, he stood trembling, but the divine mother drawing near to him, said : "Why do you doubt ? What do you fear, Guido ? I am the mother of God, this is my son Jesus, who wishes to come to you ;" and saying this, she placed him in her arms. Guido had not been three years in religion when he fell dangerously ill. St. Romuald saw the poor youth writhing and trembling, and heard him saying : "Oh Father, do you see all the Moors in this cell "? "My son," said the saint to him, "do you remember any thing you have not confessed ?" "Yes, Father," he answered, " I remember having disobeyed the prior, by not picking up certain brooms, and now I confess it." St. Romuald absolved him, and then the scene changed; the devils fled, and the Virgin again appeared with Jesus, at the sight of whom Guido died in perfect peace.*

88.—A Cistercian nun in Toledo, called Mary, being at the point of death, the divine mother appeared to her, and Mary said to her: "Oh Lady, the favor you do me of visiting me, emboldens me to ask you another favor, namely, that I may die at the same hour that you died and entered into heaven. "Yes," answered

* Franc. Lelli in Vita.

Mary. "I will satisfy you; you shall die at that hour, and you shall hear the songs and praises with which the blessed accompanied my entrance into heaven; and now prepare." When she had said this she disappeared. The religious who heard the nun talking to herself, believed her wandering in mind, but she related to them the vision, and the promised grace, and awaited the desired hour; and when she knew it had arrived, by the striking of the clock (the writer does not tell us what hour it was), she said: "Behold, the predicted hour has come; I hear the music of the angels; at this hour my queen ascended into heaven; rest in peace, for I am going now to see her;" and saying this she expired, while her eyes became bright as stars, and her face glowed with a beautiful color.*

89.—In the city of Sens, in France, there lived towards the eighth century St. Opportuna, the daughter of a prince of royal blood. This holy virgin, who had a great devotion to Mary, became a religious in a neighboring monastery, and being at the point of death, she saw St. Cecilia and St. Lucia standing beside her in the dawn of the morning. "My sisters, be welcome," she said to them; "what message do you bring me from my queen?" And they answered: "She is waiting for thee in paradise." After this the devil appeared to her, and the saint boldly sent him away, saying: "Brute beast, what hast thou to do with me who am the servant of Jesus?" The hour of her death, which

* Menol. Cist. ai Santi d'Agosto.

she herself had predicted, having arrived, after receiving the holy viaticum, she turned towards the door, and said: "Behold the mother of God who comes to take me. Sisters, I commend you to her. Adieu, we shall see each other no more." Thus saying, she raised her arms, as if to embrace her Lady, and gently expired.†

NOVENA OF MEDITATIONS

FOR THE NINE DAYS PRECEDING THE FEAST OF THE PURIFICATION OF MARY, WHICH COMMENCES ON THE 24TH OF JANUARY.

The above-mentioned meditations are upon the Litany of Loretto, and can be used for all the Novenas preceding the principal festivals of the Divine Mother.

FIRST DAY.

1st. "SANCTA MARIA, ora pro nobis:" Holy Mary, pray for us. Since in the Litanies of our Lady the Church instructs us to repeat so many times the petition that she will pray for us, "Ora pro nobis," it is well before meditating upon the titles by which the holy Virgin is invoked, to consider of how great value with God are the prayers of Mary. Blessed is that person for whom Mary prays! Jesus is pleased when his most beloved mother prays to him, and grants all she asks. One day St. Bridget heard Jesus speaking with Mary, and thus saying to her: "My mother, ask what thou wilt of

* Surius die 22 Aprilis.

me, for thy petition cannot be in vain." * And then he added: "Thou didst deny me nothing on earth, I will deny thee nothing in heaven." St. Bernard says: To be heard by this Son is to be graciously heard: "A Filio audiri est exaudiri." It is enough that Mary speaks, her Son grants whatever she asks. Therefore let us always pray to this divine mother if we wish to obtain eternal salvation, and let us say with St. Andrew of Candia, or perhaps of Jerusalem: We, then, supplicate thee, oh most holy Virgin, to grant us the aid of thy prayers with God; prayers that are more precious than all the treasures of the earth; prayers that obtain for us a great abundance of graces; prayers that confound our enemies, and triumph over their forces.

2d. "Sancta Maria:" Holy Mary. The name of Mary is a name of salvation. This name came not from earth, but from heaven; and therefore St. Epiphanius says, that it was not given to Mary by her parents, but was bestowed upon her by the express will of God. Hence it is that after the name of Jesus, the name of Mary is superior to every name, for God has filled it with grace and sweetness in order that through it every blessing may be obtained by him who names it. St. Bernard said: Oh Mary, thy name cannot be pronounced without inflaming the heart of him who utters it with love to thee. And the blessed Henry Suso exclaimed: Oh Mary, what must thou thyself be if thy

* Mater pete quod vis a me; non enim potest esse inanis petitio tua. Tu nihil mihi negasti in terris; ego nihil tibi negabo in cœlis.

name is so amiable and gracious! Name full of blessings. St. Bonaventure said that the name of Mary cannot be invoked without profit to him who invokes it. But more than all, this name has the power to overcome the temptations of hell. Ah, my Lady, if I had always invoked thee in my temptations, I should never have fallen. For the future I shall never cease to invoke thee, saying: "Mary, help me; Mary, succor me." And do thou obtain for me the grace always to invoke thee in the perils of my soul.

3d. "Sancta Dei genitrix:" Holy mother of God. If the prayers of the saints avail much with God, how much more will the prayers of Mary avail! The former are the prayers of servants, but the latter are the prayers of a mother. St. Antoninus says that the prayer of Mary has the force of a command with Jesus Christ: "Oratio Virginis habet rationem imperii;" and hence he adds, that it is impossible for this mother to ask a favor of the Son that the Son will not grant her: "Impossibile est Deiparam non exaudiri." Therefore St. Bernard exhorts us to ask through Mary for every grace that we wish from God: "Quæramus gratiam, et per Mariam quæramus;" for she is the mother, and is always graciously heard: "Quia mater est, et frustrari non potest." Oh great mother of God, pray to Jesus for me. Look upon the miseries of my soul, and have pity on me. Pray, and never cease to pray for me until thou seest me safe in paradise. Oh Mary, thou art my hope; do not

abandon me. Holy mother of God, pray for us: "Sancta Dei genitrix, ora pro nobis."

SECOND DAY.

1st. "Mater divinæ gratiæ:" Mother of divine grace. Mary is called by St. Anselm: Mother of all graces: "Mater omnium gratiarum." And by the Idiot: Treasurer of divine grace: "Thesauraria gratiarum." Hence St. Bernardine of Sienna writes: All the graces which we receive from God are dispensed by the hand of Mary, and are dispensed to whom Mary will, when she will, and as she will.* This she herself says: "With me are riches and glory . . . that I may enrich them that love me."† The Lord has placed in my hand all the riches of his graces, that I may enrich those who love me. Then, oh my queen, if I love thee I shall be no longer poor as I am now. After my God, I love thee above all things; do thou obtain for me greater tenderness and love for thy goodness. St. Bonaventure tells me that every one will be saved if thou wilt have him saved: "Quem ipsa vis salvus erit." And therefore will I say to thee with the same saint: Oh salvation of those who invoke thee, save me: "O salus te invocantium, salva me." Save me from hell, and first save me from sin, which alone can bring me to hell.

2d. "Mater purissima:" Mother most pure. This fair and pure virgin mother renders all her servants chaste and pure. St. Ambrose writes that

* Omnia dona et gratiæ quibus vult, quando vult, et quomodo vult per ipsius manus dispensantur.

† Mecum sunt divitiæ ut ditem diligentes me. Prov. viii. 18, 21.

even when Mary was on the earth, by her presence she inspired with the love of purity all those who looked upon her.* She was called the lily among thorns: "Sicut lilium inter spinas sic amica mea inter filias."† All other virgins, says St. Denis the Carthusian, are thorns either to themselves or to others; but the blessed Virgin was neither a thorn to herself nor to others, for she inspired with pure and holy affection all those who beheld her. Moreover, Frigenius, author of the life of St. Thomas Aquinas, writes, that this saint said that even the image of this chaste turtle-dove extinguishes the sensual emotions of him who looks upon it with devotion. And the venerable John of Avila relates that many persons who were suffering from temptations against purity, were preserved pure through the devotion to our Lady. Oh, how especially powerful is the name of Mary, in conquering all temptations to this vice! Oh Mary, most pure, free me from this vice; make me always to have recourse to thee in temptations, and invoke thee so long as the temptation continues.

3d. "Mater inviolata:" Mother inviolate. Mary was that immaculate woman who appeared in the eyes of God all pure and spotless: "Tota pulchra es, amica mea, et macula non est in te."‡ Wherefore the was called the reconciler of sinners, as St. Ephrem salutes her: "Hail, conciliatrix of the world: "Ave conciliatrix orbis." And as she herself said in the Canticles:

* Tanta erat Mariæ gratia, ut si quis inviseret, integritatis in signe donum conferret. † Cant. ii. 2. ‡ Cant. iv. 7.

"Since I am become in his presence as one finding peace."* St. Gregory says that if a rebel should appear before the offended king to appease him, it would only provoke him the more to anger. But Mary being destined to treat of peace between God and men, it was not fitting that she should appear as a partaker in the crime of Adam, and therefore the Lord preserved Mary from every stain of sin. Ah, my immaculate queen; oh spotless dove, so dear to God; ah, do not disdain to look upon the many stains and wounds of my soul; look on me and help me. That God who loves thee so much, denies thee nothing, neither dost thou know how to deny thyself to him who invokes thee. Oh Mary, to thee I have recourse; have pity on me. Mother inviolate, pray for us: "Mater inviolata, ora pro nobis."

THIRD DAY.

1st. "Mater amabilis:" Amiable mother. Richard of St. Lawrence says that the blessed Virgin was amiable in the eyes of God himself: "Fuit beata Virgo amabilis oculis ipsius Dei." Mary was so beautiful in the eyes of God, that God was enamored of her beauty. How beautiful art thou, my love! how beautiful art thou! "Quam pulchra es, amica mea, quam pulchra es."† Hence he called her his only dove, his only perfect one: One is my dove; my perfect one is but one: "Una est columba mea, una est perfecta mea."‡ It is certain, as Father Suarez

* Ex quo facta sum coram eo quasi pacem reperiens.
† Cant. iv. 1. ‡ Cant. vi.

says, that God loves Mary more than all the other saints together, and justly, for she alone loves God more than all men and all the angels. Oh Mary, most pure; oh Mary, most lovely, thou didst gain the heart of God; take possession of my poor heart also, and make me holy. I love thee, and I confide in thee. Amiable mother, pray for us: "Mater amabilis, ora pro nobis."

2d. "Mater Salvatoris:" Mother of the Saviour. St. Bonaventure calls Mary the mediatrix of our salvation: "Maria mediatrix nostræ salutis;" and St. John Damascene: The deliverer of the world: "Salvatrix mundi suo modo." For two reasons, Mary may be called the deliverer of the world and our mediatrix; that is, mediatrix of grace, as Jesus Christ is the mediator of justice. First, by the consent she gave to the incarnation of the Word; for by such a consent, says St. Bernardine, she procured for us salvation: "Per hunc consensum omnium salutem procuravit." Secondly, by the consent which Mary gave to the death of her Son, being willing that for our salvation, he should be sacrificed on the cross. I will say to thee then, oh mother of my Saviour, thou who once didst offer to God the life of thy Son, save me now by thy intercession.

3d. "Virgo veneranda:" Virgin most venerable. St. Anselm declares, that when we say of Mary that she is the mother of God, we say that she surpasses in greatness, after God, every thing that can be conceived or expressed; whence he says to her: Oh Lady, nothing is equal to thee

for every thing is either above thee, and that is God; or it is beneath thee, and that is every thing that is not God. In a word, St. Bernardine says that God alone can know the greatness of Mary;* and the blessed Albertus Magnus affirms that Mary could not be more united to God except by becoming God. "Magis Deo conjungi non potuit, nisi fieret Deus." Truly worthy then of our veneration is this great mother of God, for God himself could not make her greater than he has done, by making her his mother. Oh, mother of God, and my mother, Mary, I adore thee, and would wish thee to be adored by all hearts, as that exalted Lady thou art. Have mercy on a poor sinner, who loves thee and trusts in thee. Virgin most venerable, pray for us: "Virgo veneranda, ora pro nobis."

FOURTH DAY.

1st. Virgo prædicanda:" Virgin to be praised. The holy Church sings that this divine mother is worthy of all praise: "Omni laude dignissima;" for according to St. Ildephonsus, all praise that is given to the blessed Virgin is an honor paid to her Son: "Refunditur in filium quod impenditur matri." With reason, then, did St. George of Nicomedia declare that the praises given to Mary God accepts, as if offered to himself.† The holy Virgin promises paradise to him who endeavors to make her known and loved.‡ Rich-

* Tanta est perfectio Virginis, ut soli Deo cognoscenda reservetur.
† Tuam enim gloriam Creator existimat esse propriam.
‡ Qui elucidant me vitam æternam habebunt. Offic. in Concep. B. Virg.

ard of St. Lawrence says that Mary will honor in eternity those who honor her in this life.* St. Anselm says, that as Mary, by being mother of God, was the means of saving sinners, so sinners receive salvation by proclaiming the praises of Mary. Not all can be preachers; but all can praise her, and tell others, when speaking familiarly with relatives and friends, of the merits of Mary, of her power and her mercy, and thus induce them to become servants of this divine mother. Oh queen of heaven, from this day I wish to do all that I can to make thee venerated and loved by all. Accept this my desire, and help me to fulfil it: in the mean time admit me among the number of thy servants, and no longer permit me to be a slave of Lucifer.

2d. "Virgo potens:" Virgin most powerful. And who among the saints is so powerful with God as his most holy mother? She obtains whatever she wishes, as St. Bernard has said: It is enough that thou dost wish, and all things are done: "Velis tu et omnia fient." St. Peter Damian even says that when Mary asks graces from God she does not pray, but in a certain manner commands.† Thus the Son honors this mother whom he loves so much, by granting her whatever she asks, even favors for sinners. Hence St. Germanus says: Thou art the mother of God, omnipotent to save sinners, and thou hast no need of any other recommendation with

* Honorantes eam in hoc sæculo, honorabit in futuro.

† Accedis non rogans, sed imperans; nam filius nihil negans, honorat.

God, for thou art the mother of true life. Oh, Mary thou canst make me holy; in thee I trust.

3d. "Virgo clemens:" Most clement Virgin. As Mary is powerful with God, so is she clement and merciful towards those who have recourse to her intercession. Neither the power nor the will is wanting to her, as St. Bernard says: "Nec facultas, nec voluntas illi deesse potest." The power to save us cannot be wanting to Mary, for she is mother of God; neither can the will be wanting to aid us, for she is our mother. And who has ever had recourse to Mary and been abandoned? Let him cease to praise thy mercy, says again St. Bernard, who remembers having ever invoked thee without being heard.* St. Bonaventure asserts that the desire of Mary to be invoked by us, in order that she may dispense to us her favors more abundantly, is so great, that she not only considers herself offended by those who injure her, but also by those who do not ask favors of her.† Thus it is not needful to pray long to this mother of mercy, in order to obtain her aid; it is enough to ask it of her with confidence. Her clemency comes to our aid before we invoke it, as Richard of St. Victor says: "Velocius occurrit ejus pietas, quam invocetur;" and he gives us the reason, saying: She cannot see our miseries, and not be moved by them: "Non potest miserias scire,

* Sileat misericordiam tuam, si quis te invocatam meminerit defuisse.

† In te, Domina, peccant non solum qui tibi injuriam irrogant, sed etiam qui te non rogant.

et non subvenire." Behold, then, oh Mary, behold my miseries, and succor me: "Virgo clemens, ora pro nobis."

FIFTH DAY.

1st. "Virgo fidelis:" Virgin most faithful. Blessed is he who with his prayers, watches at the gates of Mary, as the poor wait at the gates of the rich to obtain relief! "Blessed is the man," as she herself says, "that heareth me, and that watcheth daily at my gates!"* Oh, that we were faithful in serving this divine mother, as she is faithful in succoring us when we pray to her! Mary promises to those who serve and honor her, that they shall be free from sins, and shall obtain eternal salvation. "They that work by me shall not sin. . . . They that explain me shall have life everlasting."† She invites all to come to her, and promises them every grace that they hope for: "In me is all grace of the way and of the truth; in me is all hope of life and of virtue. . . . come over to me all."‡ St. Lawrence Justinian applies to Mary that other text of Ecclesiasticus: Her bands are a healthful binding: "Vincula illius alligatura salutaris;"§ and then adds: "Wherefore bands? un-

* Beatus homo qui audit me et vigilat ad fores meas quotidie. Prov. viii. 34.

† Qui operantur in me non peccabunt. . . . . qui elucidat me vitam æternam habebunt. Eccli. xxiv. 30, 31.

‡ In me gratia omnis viæ et veritatis; in me omnis spes vitæ et virtutis . . . transite ad me omnes. Eccli. xxiv. 25, 26.

§ vi. 31.

fess to bind her servants, that they may not go astray into unlawful fields."* Mary binds her servants that they may not take too much liberty, and thus cause their ruin. Oh mother of God, in thee I place all my hopes: thou must save me from falling again into sin. Oh my Lady, do not abandon me; obtain for me the grace to die rather than to lose the grace of God.

2d. "Causa nostræ latitiæ:" Cause of our joy. As after the darkness and gloom of night, the dawn is the cause of joy, thus after the darkness of sin, which for four thousand years before the coming of Jesus Christ had prevailed on earth, the birth of Mary, our Aurora, brought joy to the world. When Mary was born, the morning rose, says a holy Father: "Nata Maria, surrexit Aurora." The dawn is the precursor of the sun, and Mary was the precursor of the incarnate Word, the Sun of Justice and our Redeemer, who by his death, freed us from eternal death. With reason does the Church sing of the nativity of Mary: "Thy birth, oh holy mother of God, announced joy to the whole world."† And as Mary was the beginning of our joy, so is she also the completion of it; for St. Bernard says that Jesus Christ has placed the whole treasure of his merits in the hands of his mother, so that every good we receive we may receive

* Quare vincula. Nisi quia serves suos ligat, ne discurrant per campos licentiæ.

† Nativitas tua sancta Dei genitrix gaudium annunciavit universo mundo.

through Mary.* On mother of God, thou art my joy and my hope, for thou dost refuse thy favor to none, and thou dost obtain from God whatever thou dost wish.

3d. "Vas insigne devotionis: " Vessel of singular devotion. Devotion, as St. Thomas teaches, consists in the readiness of our will to conform to the will of God. This readiness was the principal virtue that rendered his most holy mother so dear to God. And this we are given to understand by the answer of our Lord to the woman who called blessed the womb that bore him: "Yea rather blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it."† By this, according to Bede, the Lord intended to say, that Mary was happy by the union of her will with that of God, than by being his mother. That flower which always turns towards the sun is a true type of Mary. The divine will alone was the only aim and satisfaction of the heart of Mary, as she herself sang : "My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour."‡ Oh, blessed art thou, my Lady, who wast always and entirely united to the divine will ! Obtain for me the grace to live for the remainder of my life always in uniformity with the will of God.

* Redempturus humanum genus universum pretium contulit in Maria, ut, si quid salutis in nobis est, ab illa noverimus redundare.

† Quinimmo beati qui audiunt verbum Dei, et custodiunt illud! Luc. xi. 28.

‡ Et exultavit spiritus meus in Deo salutari meo.

SIXTH DAY.

1st. "Rosa mystica :" Mystical rose. It is said of Mary, in the holy Canticles, that she was the inclosed garden of God : "Hortus conclusus soror mea sponsa."* And St. Bernard explaining this passage, says that the Lord planted in this garden all the flowers that adorn the Church, and among others the violet of humility, the lily of purity, and the rose of charity. The rose is red ; and therefore Mary is called the rose, according to the Idiot, on account of the ardent charity with which her heart was always inflamed towards God, and towards us.† And where can we find an advocate who is more occupied with our salvation, and who loves us more than Mary ? We acknowledge that one alone in heaven is solicitous for us, as St. Augustine says of her.‡ Oh my dear mother, if I could love as thou lovest me ! I will not, however, fail of doing what I can to honor and love thee ; my sweet Lady, obtain for me the grace to be faithful to thee.

2nd. "Turris Davidica :" Tower of David. Mary is called, in the holy Canticles, Tower of David : "Thy neck is as the tower of David ; a thousand bucklers hang upon it, all the armor of valiant men."§ St. Bernardine says, that the

* iv. 12.

† Rosa rubicunda per Dei et proximi charitatem; nam igneus color charitatem denotat.

‡ Unam solam in cœlis fatemur esse solicitam.

§ Collum tuum sicut turris David; mille clypei pendent ex ea, omnis armatura fortium. Cant. iv. 4.

tower of David stood on high, that is, on Sion; and therefore Mary is called "The Tower of David," to denote the elevation of this great creature: as Sion was a most lofty place, so the blessed Virgin was most exalted.* Hence, of Mary it is said in the psalms, that her sanctity in the beginning was more exalted than the mountains: "Fundamenta ejus in montibus sanctis."† St. Gregory explains it by saying, that the divine mother was more holy in the first moments of her life than the saints have been at the moment of their death. Oh my queen and mother, I rejoice in thy greatness, and am ready to give my life that thy glory should not be diminished in the least degree, if it were possible that it could be diminished. Oh, that I might give all my blood to cause all the nations of the earth to honor and love thee as the Lady thou art!

3d. "Turris eburnea;" Tower of ivory. Thus Mary is also called: Thy neck is as a tower of ivory: "Collum tuum sicut turris eburnea."‡ Mary is called the neck, for she is the mystic neck through whom from the head, Jesus Christ, are transmitted to us the faithful, who are the members of the mystic body of the Church, the vital spirits, namely, the divine help which preserves in us the life of grace. In the words of St. Bernardine: Through the Virgin, the life-giving graces flow from Christ, the head, into

* Sicut Sion locus erat eminentissimus, sic B. Virgo altissima.
† Psal. lxxxvi. 2. ‡ Cant. vii. 4.

his mystic body.* The saint adds, that from the time when Mary conceived in her womb the incarnate Word, she received from God such honor, that no one could receive any grace except through her hands. Ivory, in a word, is smooth and strong, hence Rupert the Abbot writes of Mary: As a tower of ivory beautiful in the eye of God, terrible to the devil.† Thou, then, oh my Lady, because thou art so beloved by God, canst obtain for us every blessing; and because thou art terrible to demons, thou canst liberate us from all their snares. Have pity on us, for we glory in living under thy protection.

SEVENTH DAY.

1st. "Domus aurea:" House of gold. Gold is the symbol of love. Hence the blessed Albertus Magnus calls Mary, The golden temple of charity: "Templum aureum charitatis." And with reason; for St. Thomas says, that as every thing in the temple was covered with gold, so the beautiful soul of Mary was filled with sanctity.‡ Mary was that house of gold which the Eternal Wisdom, that is the divine Word, chose for his habitation on this earth: Wisdom hath built herself a house: "Sapientia ædificavit sibi domum." § Now this house of God, says Richard of St. Lawrence, is so rich that it can

* Per Virginem a capite Christo vitales gratiæ in ejus corpus mysticum transfunduntur.

† Sicut turris eburnea, Deo amabilis, diabolo terribilis.

‡ Nihil erat in templo quod non auro tegeretur; nihil erat in Virgine quod non sanctitate plenum esset.

§ Prov. ix. 1.

relieve all our miseries.* Oh Mary, thou dost love God so much that thou dost desire to see him beloved by all. This is the grace that above all others I ask of thee, and hope from thee; obtain from me a great love to God.

2d.. "Fœderis arca:" Ark of the covenant. Ischio calls Mary: An ark more spacious than that of Noe: "Arca Noe largior:" for in that only two animals of each kind were received, but under the mantle of Mary all find room both just and sinners. This was one day revealed to St. Gertrude, who saw a multitude of wild beast, lions, leopards, &c., who took refuge under the mantle of Mary; and she did not drive them away, but with kind hand caressed them, so that they might not fly away. The brutes who entered into the ark remained brutes; but sinners, who take shelter under the mantle of Mary, do not remain sinners. She will certainly change their hearts and render them dear to God. The Virgin herself revealed to St. Bridget: "However a man may have sinned, if with a true purpose of amendment, he returns to me, I am ready at once to receive him; neither do I look upon the sins with which he is laden, but only whether he comes with good dispositions; and then I do not disdain to bind up and heal his wounds, for I am called, and truly am, the mother of mercy." Oh mother of mercy, I will then say to thee with St. Augustine, remember that it has never been

* Domus Dei cujus tanta est abundantia, quod nostram potest replere inopiam.

known that a sinner was rejected by thee, who had recourse to thee for help; I, a miserable sinner, invoke and trust in thee.

3d. "Janua cœli:" Gate of heaven. Mary is called the gate of heaven, because no one can enter into heaven, as St. Bonaventure declares, except through Mary.* In Jerusalem is my power: "In Jerusalem potestas mea," says our queen.† And Richard of St. Lawrence adds: Commanding what I will, and introducing whom I will: "Imperando quod volo, et quos volo introducendo." I can obtain whatever I wish for my servants, and introduce whom I will into paradise. Therefore St. Bonaventure says: Those who enjoy the favor of Mary, are recognized as citizens of paradise; and those who are like her, that is, have the grace to be her servants, are written in the book of life. For this reason St. Bernardine de Bustis calls Mary the book of life, and says that he who through devotion to her finds himself written in this book, will certainly be saved. Ah, my mother, in thee I place the hopes of my eternal salvation. I love thee, save thou me: do not permit a servant of thine who loves thee to go to blaspheme thee in hell.

EIGHTH DAY.

1st. "Stella matutina:" Morning star. Mary is called by St. John Damascene: The star that

* Nullus potest intrare in cœlum, nisi per Mariam, tamquam per portam.

† In Missa. B. V.

precedes the sun: "Stella demonstrans solem." As the morning star precedes the sun, so devotion to the holy Virgin precedes the sun of divine grace; and St. Germanus says, that devotion towards Mary in a soul, is a sign that it is, or soon will be, in the state of grace. By the Church our Lady is also called: "Star of the sea," for, as St. Thomas explains it, as in the time of tempest mariners are guided into port by the star, so by Mary we are guided over the sea of this world to paradise.* Therefore St. Bernard gives us this advice: If you do not wish to be overwhelmed by the tempest of temptations, do not turn your eyes from this star of salvation.† And then he adds: Following Mary, you cannot go astray; if Mary protects you, you cannot fear being lost; if Mary favors you, you will arrive at paradise.

2d. "Salus infirmorum:" Health of the weak. Mary is called by St. Simon Stock: The medicine of sinners: "Peccatorum medicina;" and by St. Ephrem, not only medicine, but health itself: Firm health for those who have recourse to her: "Salus firma recurrentium ad eam."‡ For he who has recourse to Mary not only finds medicine, but he finds health, as she herself promises to him who seeks her: "He that shall find me shall find life, and shall have salvation from the

* Sicut per stellam maris navigantes diriguntur ad portum, sic per Mariam homines diriguntur ad cœlum.

† Ne avertas oculos a fulgore hujus sideris, si non vis obrui procellis.

‡ Ipsam sequens, non devias; ipsa protegente non metuis, ipsa propitia, pervenis.

Lord."* Neither should we fear that on account of the loathsomeness of our wounds she will refuse to take care of us. She is our mother, and as a mother does not shrink from taking care of a child covered with wounds, so this celestial physician does not refuse to cure her servants who have recourse to her. Wherefore St. Bernard says: Oh mother of God, thou hast no horror of a sinner however loathsome he may be; if he sighs for thee, thou wilt rescue him with thine own hand from despair.

3d. "Refugium peccatorum: "Refuge of sinners. Thus Mary is called by St. Germanus: The refuge, ever ready, for all sinners: "Refugium paratissimum peccatorum;" for the Idiot says, that she cannot reject any sinner, but as soon as he has recourse to her, Mary receives him.† Hence St. John Damascene calls Mary not only the refuge of the innocent, but also of the bad who implore her protection.‡ And St. Anselm also says: Thou dost embrace with maternal love the sinner who is despised by the whole world, neither dost thou leave the wretched until thou has reconciled them to their God.§ By which he gives us to understand that the sinner, being hated by God, is rendered odious

* Qui invenerit me, inveniet vitam, et hauriet salutem a Domino. Prov. viii. 35.

† Refugium tutissimum a qua nullus peccator despicitur. Omnes peccatores excipit, nec moram in hoc facit.

‡ Civitas refugii omnium ad eam confugientium.

§ Peccatorem toti mundo despectum materno affectu complecteris, nec deseris quousque miserum judici reconcilias.

and abominable in the eyes of all creatures; but if he has recourse to the refuge of sinners, Mary not only does not depise him, but affectionately embraces him, and does not abandon him until he is pardoned by her Son and our Judge, Jesus Christ. Then, oh my Lady, if thou art the refuge of all sinners, thou art also my refuge. Thou who dost not despise any one who has recourse to thee, do not despise me, for to thee I recommend myself: "Refugium peccatorum, ora pro nobis." Oh Mary, pray for us and save us.

NINTH DAY.

1st. "Consolatrix afflictorum:" Comforter of the afflicted. St. Germanus writes: Oh Mary, who has so great care of our welfare as thou hast? Is there any one who relieves us in our afflictions as thou dost?* No, replies St. Antoninus: There is none among the saints who compassionates our miseries as this most pious Lady.† And because the miseries which most afflict us are the maladies of the soul, the blessed Henry Suso calls Mary: The most faithful consoler of sinners: "Consolatrix fidelissima peccatorum." We need only show to Mary the wounds of our souls, and she immediately comes to our aid with her prayers, and consoles us. Even as Richard of St. Victor teaches, her piety prevents us and relieves us before we invoke

* Quis post filium tuum curam gerit generis humani, sicut tu? Quis ita nos defendit in nostris afflictionibus?

† Non reperitur aliquis sanctorum ita compati infirmitalibus nostris, sicut mulier hæc, B. Virgo Maria.

her: "Velocius occurrit quam invocetur." Let us say to her, then, with St. Bonaventure: Oh Mary, always console us, but especially at the hour of our death. Come, then, and take our souls, and present them to thy Son, who is to be our Judge.

2d. "Auxilium Christianorum:" Help of Christians. St. John of Damascus calls her: Aid prepared and ready to free us from all dangers.* The help of Mary is, as St. Cosmas of Jerusalem declares, omnipotent to save us from sin and from hell. St. Bernard addressed her in these words: Thou art invincible in the defence of thy servants: "Tu bellatrix egregia," doing battle with the demons who assail them. And for this reason Mary is called in the sacred Canticles: Terrible as an army set in array: "Terribilis ut castrorum acies ordinata."† Ah, my queen, if I had always had recourse to thee I should never have been conquered by my enemies. From henceforth thou must be my strength; in my temptations I will always invoke thee, and from thee I hope for victory.

3d. "Regina martyrum:" Queen of martyrs. Mary is justly called queen of martyrs; for her martyrdom, on the death of her Son on the cross, exceeded the sufferings of all the martyrs. And there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother: "Stabat juxta crucem mater ejus." Mothers fly from their children when they see

* Auxilium promptum et paratum christianorum, eripiens nos a periculis.
† Cant. vi. 3.

them dying before their eyes and cannot help them; Mary does not fly, but remains with Jesus until she sees him expire: "Stabat juxta crucem." And while Jesus is in his agony she is offering to the eternal Father the life of her Son for our salvation; but in offering it she also endures the agony of death, and experiences a suffering greater than that of every death. Oh my afflicted mother, by the merits of the sufferings thou didst endure at the foot of the cross, obtain for me a true sorrow for my sins and love for Jesus my redeemer. And by that sword which pierced thy heart when thou didst see him bow his head and expire, I pray thee to assist me at the moment of my death, and obtain for me then eternal salvation, that I may come to love thee forever with thy Son Jesus.

MEDITATION

For the day of the Purification of Mary and the Presentation of Jesus.

1st. The time having arrived when Mary was to go, according to the law, to be purified in the temple and to present Jesus to the divine Father, she departed with Joseph. Joseph took the two turtle-doves that were to be offered, and Mary takes her dear infant—she takes the divine Lamb to offer him to God as a sign of that great sacrifice which this Son was one day to complete upon the cross. Oh my God, I also unite my offering to that of Mary; I offer thee

thy Son made man, and by his merits I pray thee to give me thy grace. I do not merit it, but Jesus, to obtain it for me, has sacrificed himself to thee. For love then of Jesus, have pity on me.

2d. Behold, Mary enters into the temple and makes the oblation of her Son in the name of the whole human race. But especially on this day does Jesus offer himself to his eternal Father: Behold me, he says, oh my Father, to thee I consecrate my whole life: thou hast sent me into the world to save it; behold my blood and my life, I offer all to thee for the salvation of the world. Unhappy should I be, my dear Redeemer, if thou hadst not satisfied for me the divine justice. I thank thee for it with my whole soul, and I love thee with my whole heart. And whom should I love if I do not love a God who has sacrificed his life for me?

3d. This sacrifice was more dear to God than if all men and all the angels had offered to him their lives. Yes, because in this offering alone of Jesus the eternal Father received an infinite honor and an infinite satisfaction. Jesus Christ once said to the blessed Angela of Foligno: "I have offered myself for thee that thou mayest offer thyself to me." Yes, my Jesus, as thou didst offer to the Father thy life for me, I offer to thee my life and my whole self. Hitherto I have with so great ingratitude slighted thee, but thou hast promised to forget the offences of a sinner who repents of having offended thee;

my Jesus, I grieve for it, and I wish to die of grief. I was dead in sin; from thee I hope for life, and my life will be to love thee, oh Infinite Good. Grant that I may love thee, and I will ask of thee nothing more. Dispense the goods of this earth to those who desire them; I desire nothing but the treasure of thy love. My Jesus, thou art alone enough for me. Oh my queen and mother Mary, through thee I hope for every good.

MEDITATION

For the Day of the Annunciation to Mary.

1st. When God wished to send his Son to make himself man that he might redeem lost man, he chose for him a virgin mother, among all virgins the most pure, the most holy, and the most humble. And behold, whilst Mary was in her poor dwelling praying to God for the coming of the Redeemer, an angel appears and salutes her, and says to her: "Hail full of grace, the Lord is with thee ; blessed art thou among women."* And what does the humble Virgin when she hears such words in her honor ? She is not elated, but is silent and troubled, esteeming herself too unworthy of these praises. She was troubled at his saying : "Turbata est in sermone ejus."† Oh Mary, thou so humble and I so proud, obtain for me holy humility.

2nd. Did not those praises, at least, cause Mary to suspect that she was the destined mother of the

* Ave, gratia plena: Dominus tecum, benedicta tu in mulieribus. Luc. i. 28. † Luc. i. 29.

Redeemer? No, they only caused her to conceive a great fear of herself. Wherefore it was necessary that he should encourage her not to be afraid: "Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God."* And then he announced to her that she was chosen to be mother of the Savior of the world: "Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus."† Blessed art thou, oh Mary! how dear thou wast and art to thy God! Have pity on me.

3rd. Take courage, says St. Bernard, addressing her; why delay, holy Virgin, in giving thy consent? The eternal Word awaits it, in order to clothe himself with flesh, and become thy Son. We, who are all condemned to eternal death, are waiting for it in misery; if thou dost accept and consent to be his mother, we shall all be delivered. Quickly, oh Lady, answer; do not delay giving to the world that salvation which depends on thy consent. But rejoice, for Mary already answers to the angel: Behold, she says, the servant of the Lord, bound to do whatever her Lord commands:‡ if he chooses a servant for his mother, the servant is not to be praised, but only the goodness of God, who wishes thus to honor her. Oh Mary, most humble, thou, by thy humility, hast so enamored thy God that thou hast constrained him to make himself thy Son and our

* Ne timeas Maria, invenisti enim gratiam apud Deum.

† Ecce concipies in utero et paries filium et vocabis nomen ejus Jesum.

‡ Ecce ancilla Domini fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum

Redeemer. I know that thy Son denies thee nothing that thou dost ask ; ask of him to give me his holy love ; ask of him to pardon me all the offences which I have committed against him; ask of him to give me perseverance until death. In a word, recommend to him my soul, for thy recommendations are never rejected by a Son who loves thee so much. Oh Mary, thou must save me : thou art my hope.

MEDITATION FOR THE SECOND DAY OF JULY.

On the Feast of the Visitation of Mary.

1st. Mary set out from Nazareth to go to the city of Hebron, distant, according to Broccardo, seventy miles; that is to say, at least seven days' journey over rough mountains and with no other companion than her spouse Joseph. The holy Virgin hastens, as St. Luke informs us: She went into the mountainous country in haste: "Abiit in montana cum festinatione."* Tell us, oh holy Lady, why thou didst undertake this long and difficult journey, and why thou didst thus hasten on thy way? I am going, she answers, to exercise my office of charity; I am going to console a family. If, then, oh great mother of God, thy office is to console and dispense graces to souls, ah come to console and visit my soul. Thy visit then sanctified the house of Elizabeth; come, oh Mary, and sanctify me also.

* L. 39.

2d. And now the holy Virgin has arrived at the house of Elizabeth. She had been made mother of God, but she is the first to salute her relation. She entered, and saluted Elizabeth: Intravit et salutavit Elisabeth. Elizabeth enlightened by the Lord, already knows that the divine Word has become man and the Son of Mary; hence she calls her blessed among women, and blesses that divine fruit that was in her womb: "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb."* And, filled (at the same time) with confusion and joy, she exclaims: "And whence is this to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?"† But what does the humble Mary answer to these words? She answers: My soul doth magnify the Lord: "Magnificat anima mea Dominum." As if she would say: Ah, Elizabeth, you praise me; but I praise my God that he has chosen to exalt me, his poor servant, to be his mother: he hath regarded the humility of his servant: "Respexit humilitatem ancillæ suæ." Oh most holy Mary, since thou dost dispense so many graces to those who ask them of thee, I pray thee to give me thy humility. Thou dost esteem thyself as nothing before God; but I am worse than nothing, for I am, at the same time, nothing and a sinner. Thou canst make me humble. Make me so through love of that God who has made thee his mother.

3d. But at the first words of Mary, when she

* Benedicta tu in mulieres, et benedictus fructus ventris tui.
† Et unde hoc mihi, ut veniat mater Domini mei ad me?

salutes Elizabeth, what happens? The child, John, exults with joy on account of the divine grace given him before his birth;* Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit, and Zachary, the Father of the Baptist, not long after, is consoled by recovering his speech. So that it is indeed true, oh my queen and mother, that through thee the divine graces are dispensed, and souls are sanctified. Do not forget, then, oh my most dear Lady, me, thy poor servant, who loves thee, and has placed in thee all my hopes. Thy prayers are all graciously heard by that God who loves thee so much. Pray, then, for me, oh my mother, and make me holy.

MEDITATION FOR THE FIFTEENTH DAY OF AUGUST.

On the Feast of the Assumption of Mary into Heaven.

1st. MARY dies; but how does she die? She dies entirely detached from any affection for created things, and dies consumed with that divine love with which her most holy heart was always and entirely inflamed. Oh holy mother, thou hast already left the earth; do not forget us, miserable pilgrims, who remain in this valley of tears struggling against so many enemies, who desire to see us lost in hell. Ah, by the merits of thy precious death, obtain for us detachment from earthly things, pardon of our sins, love to God, and holy perseverance; and, when the hour of our death shall arrive, assist

* Ut audivit salutationem Mariæ Elisabeth exultavit infans in utero ejus, et repleta est spiritu sancto Elisabeth. Luc. i. 41.

us from heaven with thy prayers, and obtain for us to come and kiss thy feet in paradise.

2d. Mary dies, and her most pure body is carried by the holy apostles, and placed in the sepulchre, and is guarded by angels for three days, after which it is transported to paradise; but her beautiful soul entered, as soon as she expired, the kingdom of the blessed, accompanied by innumerable angels and by her Son himself. Having entered heaven, she humbly presents herself to God, adores him, and, with unbounded love, thanks him for all the graces which she has received from him. God embraces her, blesses her, and constitutes her queen of the universe, exalting her above all the angels and saints.* Now, if the human mind, as the apostle says, cannot arrive at the comprehension of the great glory that God is preparing in heaven for his servants who have loved him on this earth, what must be the glory that he gave to this his most holy mother, who on earth has loved him more than all the saints and angels, and has loved him with all her power! So that Mary alone, when she entered heaven, could say to God: Oh my Lord, if I have not loved thee on earth as thou dost merit, at least I have loved thee as much as I could.

3d. Let us rejoice with Mary in the glory with which her God has enriched her; and let us also rejoice for ourselves, for Mary, at the same time was made queen of the world, and

* Exaltata est sancta Dei genitrix super choros angelorum ad cœlestia regna.

appointed our advocate. She is so merciful ar advocate, that she consents to defend all sinners who recommend themselves to her; and she is so powerful with our Judge that she gains all the causes which she defends. Oh our queen and advocate, in thy hand is our salvation: if thou dost pray for us, we shall be saved. Say to thy Son that thou dost wish us with thee in paradise. He denies thee nothing that thou dost ask. Oh our life, our sweetness, and our hope! Mary, pray Jesus for us.

MEDITATION FOR THE EIGHTH DAY OF SEPTEMBER.

On the Feast of the Nativity of Mary.

1st. BEFORE the birth of Mary the world was lost in the darkness of sin. Mary was born, and the morning arose: "Nata Maria, surrexit auroro," says a holy Father. Already it had been said of Mary: "Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising?"* As the earth rejoices when the day dawns, for the dawn is the precursor of the sun, so Mary at her birth gave joy to the whole world, for she was the precursor of the sun of justice, Jesus Christ, who being made her son, came to save us by his death; therefore the Church sings; "Thy nativity, oh virgin mother of God, announced joy to the whole world, for from thee the sun of justice has arisen, who has

* Quæ est ista quæ progreditur quasi aurora consurgens? Cant. vi. 9.

given us life eternal."* Thus, when Mary was born, we received our remedy, our consolation, and our salvation; for through Mary we have received the Saviour.

2d. This child being then destined for the mother of the eternal Word, God bestowed on her so much grace, that even from her immaculate conception her sanctity excelled the sanctity of all the saints and angels united, for she received a grace of a superior order, corresponding to the dignity of mother of God. Oh holy infant, oh full of grace, I, a miserable sinner, salute thee and adore thee. Thou art the beloved, the delight of God; have pity on me, who through my sins have been hateful and abominable in the eyes of God. Thou, oh most pure Virgin, hast so well known even from thy infancy how to gain the heart of God, that he denies thee nothing, and grants all that thou dost ask of him. In thee then I place my hopes. Recommend me to thy Son, and I shall be saved.

3d. At the same time that Mary was destined to be the mother of our Redeemer, she was also destined to be the mediatrix between God and us sinners. Hence the Angelic Doctor, St. Thomas, says, that Mary received grace sufficient to save all men; and therefore St. Bernard calls Mary a channel so full that we can all partake of its fulness.† Oh my queen, oh mediatrix of sinners, perform thy office and in-

* Nativitas tua, Dei genitrix virgo, gaudium annuntiavit universo mundo, ex te enim ortus est sol justitiæ, qui donavit nobis vitam sempiternam.

† Plenus aquæductus, ut accipiant ceteri de ejus plenitudine.

tercede for me! Let not my sins prevent me from confiding in thee, oh great mother of God; no, I trust in thee, and trust in thee so much, that if my salvation were in my own hands, yet I would place it all in thine. Oh Mary, receive me under thy protection, and this is enough for me.

MEDITATION FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST DAY OF NOVEMBER.

On the Feast of the Presentation of Mary.

1st. The holy child Mary, having hardly arrived at the age of three years, entreated her parents that she might be placed in the temple according to the promise which they had made. The day appointed having arrived, the immaculate young Virgin leaves Nazareth with St. Joachim and St. Anne, accompanied by a host of angels who attend that holy child who was destined for the mother of their Creator. Go, says St. Germanus, go, oh blessed Virgin, to the house of the Lord, to await the Holy Spirit, who is to come to render thee mother of the eternal Word.

2d. The holy company having arrived at the temple in Jerusalem, the holy child turns to her parents, and kneeling, kisses their hands, asks their blessing, and then, without looking back, ascends the steps of the temple. There renouncing entirely the world and all things that the world could give her, she offers and consecrates herself wholly to God. Henceforth the life of

Mary in the temple was but one continual exercise of love, and the offering of her whole self to her Lord. She increased from hour to hour, nay, from moment to moment, in holy virtues, sustained indeed by divine grace, but always endeavoring, with all her powers, to correspond with grace. Mary herself revealed this to St. Elizabeth, the virgin, saying: "Do you think that I obtained the graces and virtues without an effort? Know that I received from God no grace without great effort, continual prayer, an ardent desire, and many tears and penances."

3d. Thus Mary, a young virgin in the temple, did nothing but pray. And seeing the human race lost and hateful to God, she especially prayed for the coming of the Messias, desiring then to be the servant of that happy Virgin who was to be the mother of God. Oh, who would have said to her then: Oh holy Lady, know that already through thy prayers the Son of God is hastening to come and redeem the world; and know that thou art the blessed one chosen to be the mother of thy Creator. Oh beloved of God, most holy child, thou prayest for all, pray also for me. Thou hast consecrated thyself wholly, even from infancy, to the love of thy God ; ah, obtain for me at least that during the remaining years of my life I may live for God alone. To-day together with thee, I renounce all creatures, and consecrate myself to the love of my Lord. I also offer myself to thee, oh my queen, to serve thee forever. Accept me for thy special servant,

and obtain for me the grace to be faithful to thee and to thy Son, that I may come one day to praise thee and love thee eternally in paradise.

MEDITATION FOR THE EIGHTH DAY OF DECEMBER.

On the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

1st. It was indeed befitting the three divine persons to preserve Mary from original sin. It was befitting the Father, for Mary was his first-born daughter. As Jesus was the first-born of God: "Primogenitus omnis creaturæ,"* so Mary, being destined to become the mother of Jesus, God always considered her as his adopted first-born daughter, and therefore always possessed her by his grace: "Dominus possedit me in initio viarum suarum."† It was, then, befitting the honor of the Son that the Father should preserve the mother from every stain of sin. It was also fitting, because he destined this his daughter to crush the head of the infernal serpent which had seduced man, as we read: Ipsa conteret caput tuum. How could he then permit that she should first be his slave? Moreover, Mary was also destined to be the advocate of sinners; and for this reason also it was meet that God should preserve her from sin, that she might not appear guilty of the very sin of those for whom she was to intercede.

* Coles. i. 15. † Prov. viii. 22.

2d. It was befitting the Son that his mother should be immaculate. He chose her himself for his mother and it cannot be believed that a son who has it in his power to choose a queen for his mother, would choose a slave. How then could we believe that the eternal Word would wish his mother once defiled by sin, and once an enemy of God, when it was in his power to have an immaculate mother and one always the friend of God? Moreover, St. Augustine says: The flesh of Christ is the flesh of Mary: "Caro Christi caro est Mariæ." The Son of God would have felt horror at taking flesh from St. Agnes, St. Gertrude, or St. Theresa, because those holy virgins, before baptism, were stained by sin, and the devil would have been able to reproach him for being clothed with a flesh which once had been subject to him. But he felt no horror at becoming man in the womb of Mary: "Non horruisti virginis uterum," Mary having always been pure and immaculate. Besides, St. Thomas says that Mary was preserved from every actual sin, even venial, for otherwise she would not have been a fitting mother of God; but how much less fit would she have been, if she had been defiled by original sin, which renders the soul odious to God!

3d. It was befitting the Holy Spirit that this his most beloved spouse should be immaculate. The redemption of men who had already fallen into sin being decreed, he wished that this his spouse should be redeemed in the most noble manner, namely, by being preserved from falling

into sin. And if God preserved the body of Mary after her death, how much more ought we to believe that he would preserve her soul from the corruption of guilt? For this reason the divine spouse called her an inclosed garden, a sealed fountain (Cant.) for the enemies never entered the blessed soul of Mary. Therefore he praised her, calling her all fair, always beloved, and spotless. Ah, my most lovely Lady, it is my delight to see thee so dear to thy God through thy purity and beauty. I thank God for having preserved thee from every sin. Ah, my queen, since thou art so loved by the most Holy Trinity, do not disdain to cast thy eyes upon my soul so defiled by sin, that thou mayest obtain for me, from God, pardon and eternal salvation. Look upon me and change me. Thou, by thy sweetness, hast drawn so many hearts to love thee, draw also my heart, that henceforth I may love no other than God and thee. Thou knowest that in thee I have placed all my hopes; my dear mother, do not abandon me. Assist me always by thy intercession, in life and especially in death; make me then to die invoking thee, and loving thee, that I may come to love thee forever in paradise.

PRAYERS TO THE DIVINE MOTHER

FOR EVERY DAY OF THE WEEK.

SUNDAY.

Prayer to the most holy Mary to obtain the pardon of sins.

Behold, oh mother of God, at thy feet a miserable sinner, the slave of hell, who has recourse to thee, and trusts in thee. I do not even merit that thou shouldst look upon me, but I know that having seen thy Son die to save sinners, thou hast the greatest desire to aid them. Oh mother of mercy, look on my miseries, and have pity on me. I hear thee called by all: The refuge of sinners, the hope of the desperate, the help of the abandoned. Then thou art my refuge, my hope, my help. Thou must save me by thy intercession. Succor me for the love of Jesus Christ, give thy hand to a poor fallen sinner who recommends himself to thee. I know that thou dost find consolation in helping the sinner when thou canst; help me then, for thou canst help me. I, by my sins have lost the grace of God and my own soul. Now I place myself in thy hands; tell me what I must do to return to the favor of my Lord, for I will do it without delay. He sends me to thee, that thou mayest succor me, and he wishes me to have recourse to thy mercy, that not only the merits of thy Son, but also thy prayers may aid in my sal-

vation. To thee then I have recourse; thou who dost pray for so many others, pray also to Jesus for me. Ask him to pardon me, and he will pardon me; tell him that thou dost desire my salvation, and he will save me. Make known the good that thou canst do to those who confide in thee. Amen; thus I hope, thus may it be.

MONDAY.

Prayer to the most holy Mary to obtain holy perseverance.

Oh queen of heaven, I who once have been a miserable slave of Lucifer, now dedicate myself to thee, as thy servant forever, and offer myself to honor and serve thee for the whole life; accept me, do not refuse me as I merit. Oh my mother, I have placed in thee all my hopes, from thee I hope all blessings. I thank and bless God, who in his mercy has given me this confidence in thee, which I consider as the great earnest of my salvation. Ah, how have I fallen in my past life, I a miserable sinner, because I have not had recourse to thee! Now I hope to be pardoned through the merits of Jesus Christ, and through thy prayers. But I may again lose the divine grace; the danger is not over; my enemies do not sleep. How many new temptations remain for me to conquer! Ah, my most sweet Lady, protect me, and do not permit me again to be their slave; help me always. I know that thou wilt help me, and with thy help I shall conquer, if I recommend myself to thee;

but this I fear, that in occasions of falling into sin, I may neglect to call on thee, and thus may be lost. This grace I ask of thee, obtain for me that in the assaults of hell, I may always have recourse to thee, saying: Mary, aid me. My good mother, do not permit me to lose my God.

TUESDAY.

Prayer to Mary most holy to obtain a good death.

Oh Mary, what will be my death? I tremble and am confounded when I now consider my sins, and think of that great, decisive moment of my salvation or eternal damnation, when I shall die and be judged. Oh my most sweet mother, my hopes are in the blood of Jesus Christ, and in thy intercession. Oh consoler of the afflicted, do not abandon me then; do not cease consoling me in that great affliction. If now I am tormented with remorse on account of past sins, the uncertainty of pardon, the danger of relapse, and the rigor of divine justice, what will become of me then? If thou dost not aid me, I am lost. Ah, my Lady, before my death arrives, obtain for me a great sorrow for my sins, a true amendment, and fidelity to God for the life that remains to me. And when the last moment of my life comes, oh Mary my hope, aid me then in my great distress, and encourage me then that I may not despair at the sight of my sins which the demon will present to me. Obtain for me the grace to invoke thee then more constantly, that I may expire with

thy sweet name, and that of thy most holy Son, upon my lips. And now, oh Lady, pardon my boldness: before I expire come thyself to console me by thy presence. This grace thou hast granted to so many of thy servants, I also wish and hope for it. I am, indeed, a sinner, and I do not merit it; but I am thy servant, who loves thee, and has great confidence in thee. Oh Mary, I wait for thee, do not leave me disconsolate. At least, if I am not worthy of so great a favor, assist me from heaven, that I may die in the love of God and of thee, and come to love God and thee eternally in paradise.

WEDNESDAY.

Prayer to Mary most holy to obtain deliverance from hell.

Oh my dearest Lady, I thank thee that thou hast so often rescued me from hell: as often as I have deserved it through my sins. Oh miserable sinner! I was already condemned to that prison, and that sentence would perhaps have been executed upon me after my first sin, if thou hadst not in thy mercy helped me. Thou wast not even invoked by me, but by thy mercy alone thou hast restrained the divine justice, and then subduing my hard-heartedness, hast drawn me to take confidence in thee. And oh, into how many sins I should have fallen in the dangers to which I have been exposed, if thou, my most loving mother, hadst not preserved me by the graces which thou hast obtained for me! Ah, my queen, still preserve me from hell. But of

what avail will be thy mercy and the favors that thou hast bestowed on me, if I should be condemned? If once I loved thee not, now, after God, I love thee above everything. Ah, do not permit that I should turn my back upon thee and upon God, who, through thee, hath dispensed to me so many mercies. My most amiable Lady, do not permit that I should hate and curse thee in hell. Wilt thou suffer a servant of thine who loves thee to be lost? Oh Mary, what dost thou say to me? I shall be lost if I leave thee. But who could have the heart to leave thee? How could I forget the love thou hast borne me? My mother, since thou hast done so much to save me, complete the work; continue to aid me. Dost thou wish to help me? But what do I say? If thou didst show me so much favor when I lived forgetful of thee, how much more ought I now to hope, when I love thee and recommend myself to thee! No, he who has recourse to thee is never lost; only he who does not recommend himself to thee. Ah, my mother, do not leave me in my own hands, for I shall be lost; make me always to have recourse to thee. Save me, my hope, save me from hell; but first from sin, which alone can condemn me to hell.

THURSDAY.

Prayer to the most holy Mary to obtain paradise.

Oh queen of paradise, who sittest above the choirs of angels, nearest to God; from this vale of misery I, a miserable sinner, salute thee, and

pray thee to turn towards me those kind eyes of thine, that dispense graces to all those they look upon. See, oh Mary, in how much danger I now find myself, and must find myself, while I live on this earth, of losing my soul, paradise, and God. In thee, oh Lady, I have placed all hopes. I love thee, and long to come to thee, see thee, and praise thee in paradise. Ah Mary, when will the day come that I shall see myself safe at thy feet, and shall behold the mother of my Lord and my mother, who has been so occupied with my salvation? When shall I kiss that hand which has so many times delivered me from hell and bestowed on me so many graces, when, by my sins, I merited to be hated and abandoned by all? Oh Lady, I have been very ungrateful to thee in my life; but if I come to paradise I will be no more ungrateful. There I will love thee as much as I can, every moment through all eternity, and I will make amends for my ingratitude by blessing thee and thanking thee forever. Above all, I thank God who gives me such confidence in the blood of Jesus Christ and in thee; namely, that thou wilt save me, that thou wilt free me from my sins, and obtain for me light and strenght to execute the divine will, and finally conduct me to the port of paradise. All this have thy servants hoped, and none have been deceived. Neither shall I be deceived. Mary, I wish nothing else; thou must save me. Pray thy Son Jesus, as I also pray him, through the merits of his passion, to preserve in me, and

always more increase this confidence, and I shall be saved.

FRIDAY.

Prayer to the most holy Mary to obtain love towards her and Jesus Christ.

Oh Mary, I know that thou art the creature the most noble, the most sublime, the most pure, the most beautiful, the most merciful, the most holy; in a word, the most lovely of all creatures. Oh, if all knew thee, oh my Lady, and loved thee as thou dost merit! But I console myself that so many happy souls in heaven and on earth live enamored of thy goodness and beauty. Above all, I rejoice that God himself loves thee alone more than all men and angels united. My most amiable queen, I, a miserable sinner, also love thee, but I love thee too little: I desire a love greater and more tender towards thee; and this thou must obtain for me, for to love thee is a great sign of predestination, and a grace that God does not grant except to those whom he wishes to be saved.

I see myself then, oh my mother, greatly indebted to thy Son. I see that he merits an infinite love. Thou who desirest nothing but to see him loved, this is the grace that above all others thou must obtain for me; obtain for me a great love for Jesus Christ. Thou dost obtain from God whatever thou dost wish; ah, obtain for me this grace, to be so united with the divine will that I may never more be separated from it. I do not ask of thee the goods of earth,

neither honors nor riches: I ask of thee what thy heart most desires, I wish to love my God. Is it possible that thou wilt not aid me in this my desire, which pleases thee so much? No, for thou dost even now help me, already thou art praying for me; pray, pray, and never cease to pray until thou seest me in paradise, beyond the danger of being able any more to lose my Lord, and certain of loving him forever, together with thee, my dearest mother.

SATURDAY.

Prayer to the most holy Mary to obtain her patronage.

Oh my most holy mother, I know what graces thou hast obtained for me, and I see the ingratitude of which I have been guilty towards thee. The ungrateful are no longer worthy of favors; but I will not on this account distrust thy mercy, which is greater than my ingratitude. Oh my great advocate, have pity on me. Thou art the dispenser of all the graces which God grants to us miserable sinners, and for this end he has made thee so powerful, so rich, and so merciful, that thou mightest succor us in our miseries. Ah mother of mercy, do not leave me in my poverty. Thou art the advocate of the most wretched and abandoned sinners who have recourse to thee, defend me also, who recommend myself to thee. Do not tell me that it is difficult to gain my cause, for the most desperate causes are all gained when they are defended by thee. In thy hands, then, I place my eternal salvation, and to thee I com-

mit my soul. It was lost; thou, by thy intercession, must save it. I wish to be enrolled among thy most devoted servants; do not cast me out: thou dost go in search of the wretched to relieve them; do not abandon a miserable sinner who has recourse to thee. Speak for me; thy Son does whatever thou dost ask of him. Take me under thy protection, and this will be enough: yes, for if thou dost protect me I fear nothing: nothing from my sins, for thou wilt obtain for me the remedy for the injury I have inflicted upon myself; nor from the demons, for thou art more powerful than all hell united; nor from Jesus my Judge himself; for by one prayer of thine he is appeased. I only fear that through my negligence I may cease to invoke thee, and shall thus be lost. My mother, obtain for me the pardon of all my sins, love to Jesus, holy perseverance, a good death, and finally, paradise; especially obtain for me the grace always to recommend myself to thee. It is true that these graces are too much for me who do not merit them, but they are not too much for thee who art so much beloved by God that he grants thee whatever thou dost ask of him. It is enough that thou dost begin to speak, and he denies thee nothing. Pray then to Jesus for me, tell him that thou dost protect me, and he will not fail to have pity on me. My mother, I trust in thee; in this hope I repose and live, and in this I wish to die. Amen.

Live always, Jesus our love and Mary our hope!

LITTLE ROSARY.

OF THE SEVEN DOLORS OF MARY.

Incline unto mine aid, oh God, &c.

My mother, enable my heart to share thy sorrow for the death of thy Son.

First Dolor.—I pity thee, oh my afflicted mother, on account of the first sword of sorrow that pierced thee, when in the temple, by the prophecy of St. Simeon, all the cruel sufferings that men would inflict on thy beloved Jesus were represented to thee, which thou hadst already learned from the holy Scriptures, even to his death before thy eyes upon the infamous wood of the cross, exhausted of blood and abandoned by all, and thou without the power to defend or relieve him. By that bitter memory, then, which for so many years afflicted thy heart, I pray thee, oh my queen, to obtain for me the grace that always in life and in death I may keep impressed upon my heart the passion of Jesus and thy sorrows.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to God, &c., Oh my mother, &c., as above. Which strophe must always be repeated at the end of each dolor.

Second Dolor.—I pity thee, oh my afflicted mother, on account of the second sword that pierced thee when thou didst behold thy innocent Son, so soon after his birth, threatened with death by those very men for whom he had come into the world; so that thou wast obliged

to flee with him by night secretly into Egypt. By the many hardships, then, that thou, a delicate young virgin, in company with thy exiled infant, didst endure in the long and wearisome journey through rough and desert countries, and in thy sojourn in Egypt, where, being unknown and a stranger, thou didst live all those years poor and despised, I pray thee oh my beloved Lady, to obtain for me the grace to suffer with patience, in thy company till death, the trials of this miserable life, that I may be able in the next to be preserved from the eternal sufferings of hell deserved by me. Our Father, &c.

Third Dolor.—I pity thee, oh my afflicted mother, on account of the third sword that pierced thy heart at the loss of thy dear son, Jesus, who remained absent from thee in Jerusalem for three days, when not seeing thy beloved one by thy side, and not knowing the cause of his absence, I conceive, my loving queen, how in these nights thou didst not repose, and didst naught but sigh for him who was thy only good. By the sighs, then, of those three days, for thee so long and bitter, I pray thee to obtain for me the grace never to lose my God, that I may always live closely united to God, and thus united with him, depart from this world. Our Father, &c.

Fourth Dolor.—I pity thee, my afflicted mother, on account of the fourth sword that pierced thy heart, in seeing thy Jesus condemned to death, bound with ropes and chains, covered

with blood and wounds, crowned with thorns, and falling under the weight of the heavy cross which he bore on his bleeding back when going like an innocent lamb to die for love of us. Thine eye then met his eye, and your glances were so many cruel arrows with which each wounded the loving heart of the other. By this great grief, then, I pray thee to obtain for me the grace to live wholly resigned to the will of my God, joyfully bearing my cross with Jesus to the last moment of my life. Our Father, &c.

Fifth Dolor.—I pity thee, oh my afflicted mother, on account of the fifth sword that pierced thy heart, when on Mount Calvary thou didst behold thy beloved son, Jesus, dying slowly before thy eyes, amid so many insults, and in anguish, on that hard bed of the cross, without being able to give him even the least of those comforts which the greatest criminals receive at the hour of death. And I pray thee by the anguish which thou, oh my most loving mother, didst suffer together with thy dying Son, and by the tenderness thou didst feel, when, for the last time he spoke to thee from the cross, and taking leave of thee, left all of us to thee in the person of St. John, as thy children; and thou, still constant, didst behold him bow his head and expire; I pray thee to obtain for me the grace, by thy crucified love, to live and die crucified to every thing in this world, in order to live only to God through my whole life, and thus to enter one day paradise, to enjoy him face to face. Our Father, &c.

Sixth Dolor.—I pity thee, oh my afflicted mother, on account of the sixth sword which pierced thy heart, when thou didst see the kind heart of thy Son pierced through and through after his death—a death endured for those ungrateful men, who, even after his death, were not satisfied with the tortures they had inflicted upon him. By this cruel sorrow, then, which was wholly thine, I pray thee to obtain for me the grace to abide in the heart of Jesus, who was wounded and opened for me; in that heart, I say, which is the beautiful abode of love, where all the souls who love God repose; and that living there, I will never love or think of any thing but God. Most holy Virgin, thou canst do it; from thee I hope for it. Our Father, &c.

Seventh Dolor.—I pity thee, my afflicted mother, on account of the seventh sword that pierced thy heart, on seeing in thy arms thy Son who had just expired, no longer fair and beautiful as thou didst once receive him in the stable of Bethlehem, but covered with blood, livid, and lacerated by wounds which exposed his very bones. My Son, thou saidst, my Son, to what has love brought thee? And when he was borne to the sepulchre, thou didst wish to accompany him thyself, and help to put him in the tomb with thy own hands; and, bidding him a last farewell, thou hast left thy loving heart buried with thy Son. By all the anguish of thy pure soul, obtain for me, oh mother of fair love, par-

don for the offences that I have committed against my God, whom I love, and of which I repent with my whole heart. Wilt thou defend me in temptations? Assist me at the hour of my death, that, being saved by the merits of Jesus and thine, I may come one day with thy aid, after this miserable exile, to sing in paradise the praises of Jesus and thine through all eternity. Amen. Our Father, &c.

Pray for us, oh most sorrowful Virgin;

That we may be worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us Pray.

Oh God, at whose passion, according to the prophecy of Simeon, the sword of sorrow pierced through the most sweet soul of the glorious virgin and mother, Mary, grant that we, who commemorate and reverence her dolors, may experience the blessed effect of thy passion, who livest and reignest world without end. Amen.

Benedict XIII. granted two hundred days' indulgence for every "Our Father" and every "Hail Mary" to those who recite this little crown in the churches of the Servites of Mary, and has granted the same favor to those who recite it in any place whatever on Fridays or any day during Lent; and on other days, one hundred days for every "Our Father," and "Hail Mary." To those who recite it entire, seven years. To those who recite it for a year, plenary indulgence, applicable to the souls in purgatory.*

Moreover, let it be observed that there are sev-

* Sinisc. in. fin. prat. 3, p. 3.

en hundred years of indulgence for the dead granted by Clement XII. to those who say, kneeling, the De Profundis at the ringing of the bell.

A LITTLE ROSARY OF THE IMMACULATE MARY,

Which is recited in some Churches.

INCLINE unto mine aid, oh God, &c. Glory, &c. After this, an "Our Father" is recited in honor of the Eternal Father, in thanksgiving for all the graces bestowed on Mary; with four "Hail Marys." The same is repeated in honor of the Son, and again in honor of the Holy Ghost. After each "Hail Mary" is recited the following verse:

As 'mid the thorns the lily fair
Art thou, Virgin immaculate,
From sin preserved, by him whose care
Did thee his mother blest create.

At the end:

V. Pray for us, oh immaculate Virgin:
Ora pro nobis, Virgo immaculata;

R. That we may be worthy of the promises of Christ:
Ut digni officiamur promissionibus Christi.

Let us Pray.

GRANT to thy servants, we pray thee, oh Lord, the gift of divine grace, that to us, for whom the maternity of the blessed Virgin was the beginning of salvation, the votive commemoration of her conception may bring an increase of peace. By our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

DEDICATION OF ONESELF TO MARY.

OH most holy virgin mother of God, Mary, I,

N., although most unworthy of being thy servant, yet moved by thy wonderful mercy and by the desire to serve thee, choose thee to-day, in presence of my guardian angel, and of the whole celestial court, for my especial Lady, Advocate, and mother, and make the firm resolution that I always will love and serve thee for the future, and do whatever I can to induce also others to love and serve thee. I pray thee, mother, of God, and my most kind and amiable mother, by the blood of thy divine Son which was shed for me, that thou wilt receive me into the number of thy servants for thy child and servant forever; assist me in all my thoughts, words, and actions, at every moment of my life, that every step and breath may be directed to the greater glory of my God, and through thy most powerful intercession obtain for me that I may never more offend my beloved Jesus, that I may glorify and love him in this life, and that I may also love thee, my most beloved and dear mother, that I may love thee and enjoy thee through eternity in holy paradise. Amen.

My mother Mary, I recommend to thee my soul, especially at the hour of my death.

DEDICATION OF A FAMILY TO MARY.

Oh blessed and immaculate Virgin, our queen and mother, refuge and consolation of all those who are in misery, I, prostrate before thy throne with all my family, choose thee for my Lady, Mother, and Advocate with God. I, with all

who belong to me, dedicate myself forever to thy service, and pray thee, oh mother of God, to receive us into the number of thy servants, taking us all under thy protection, aiding us in life, and still more, at the hour of our death. Oh mother of mercy, I choose thee Lady and ruler of my whole house, of my relatives, my interests, and all my affairs. Do not disdain to take care of them; dispose of them all as it pleases thee. Bless me, then, and all my family, and do not permit that any of us should offend thy Son. Do thou defend us in temptations, deliver us from dangers, provide for us in our necessities, counsel us in our doubts, console us in afflictions, be with us in sickness, and especially in the agonies of death. Do not permit the devil to glory in having in his chains any of us who are now consecrated to thee; but grant that we may come to thee in heaven to thank thee, and together with thee to praise and love our Redeemer Jesus for all eternity. Amen, thus may it be.

PRAYER OF ST. EPHREM TO MARY, ABBREVIATED.*

Oh immaculate and wholly pure Virgin Mary, mother of God, queen of the world, hope of the despairing; thou art the joy of the saints, thou art the reconciler of sinners to God, thou art the advocate of the abandoned, the secure haven of the shipwrecked; thou art the consolation of the world, the ransom of captives, the comforter of the afflicted, the salvation of the world. Oh great queen, we

* App. Crass. tom. 2. sec. 4.

take refuge in thy protection. We confide in none but thee, oh most pure Virgin: Non nobis est alia quam in te fiducia, O Virgo sincerissima. Oh Lady, after God we have no other hope but in thee. We bear the name of thy servants, do not permit the enemy to bear us away to hell. Hail, best mediatrix of God and men: Ave, Dei et hominum mediatrix optima. I salute thee, oh great mediatrix of peace between man and God; oh mother of Jesus our Lord, the love of all men and of God; to thee be honor and blessing with the Father and with the Holy Spirit. Amen.

PRAYER OF ST. THOMAS OF AQUIN.

Oh most blessed and sweet Virgin Mary, full of compassion, I recommend to thy mercy my soul and my body, my thoughts, my works, my life, and my death. Oh my Lady, help me and make me strong against the snares of the devil; obtain for me a true and perfect love, with which I may love with all my heart thy most beloved Son, and my Lord Jesus Christ; and after him may I love thee above all things. Oh my queen and mother, with thy most powerful intercession make this love to remain with me until death, after which may I be conducted by thee to the country of the blessed.*

PRAYER OF ST. BLOSIUS TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

Hail, Mary, hope of the despairing, help of the destitute, to whom thy Son pays so great honor that whatever thou dost ask thou dost at

* Ex offic. præd. et Diar. 7, mart.

once obtain, whatever thou dost wish is at once done. To thee are committed the treasures of the celestial kingdom. Grant, oh Lady, that amid the storms of this life, I may always turn my eyes to thee. To thy mercy I commend my soul and my body. Direct and protect me at every hour and every moment, oh my sweet protectress.

ANOTHER PRAYER.

HAIL most compassionate mother of mercy; hail consolation and pardon, Mary most desired. Who shall not love thee? Thou our light in doubt, our consolation in sorrow, our relief in distress, our refuge in perils and temptations, thou, after thy only-begotten Son, art our secure salvation. Blessed are those who love thee, oh Lady. Incline, I pray thee, thy ear of mercy to the prayers of this thy servant, this miserable sinner, and dissipate the darkness of my vices by the rays of thy sanctity, that I may please thee.*

EJACULATIONS TO THE MOST HOLY MARY.

Mother of God, remember me.—*St. Francis Xavier.*

Virgin and mother, make me always to remember thee.—*St. Philip Neri.*

Virgin Mary, mother of God, pray to Jesus for me.—*The same Saint.*

Oh Lady, obtain that Jesus may not cast me from him.—*St. Ephrem.*

Oh Mary, may my heart never cease to love

* Blosius or. ad B. V.

thee nor my tongue to praise thee.—*St. Bonaventure.*

Oh Lady, by the love which thou dost bear to Jesus, help me to love him.—*St. Bridget.*

Oh Mary, deign to make me thy servant.—*Blessed Jane of France.*

Oh Mary, I give myself wholly to thee, do thou accept and preserve me.—*St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi.*

Oh Lady, do not abandon me until death.—*P. Spinelli.*

Hail Mary my mother.—*P. Francis Brancaccio.*

Holy Mary, my advocate, pray for me.—*P. Sortorio Caputi.*

How sweet, oh my mother, is thy name of Mary!

It gives me peace, and so much pleasure,

That I wish always to repeat it.

The most holy Mary revealed to a soul devoted to her, that it pleased her much to be honored by her servants with the following devotions.

I thank thee, oh eternal Father, for the power given to Mary thy daughter Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to God.

I thank thee, oh eternal Son, for the wisdom given to Mary thy mother. Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to God.

I thank thee, oh eternal Spirit, for the love given to Mary thy spouse. Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to God.

To thee we cry, oh queen of mercy, turn towards us, and let us behold thee dispensing favors, bestowing remedies, giving strength. Show us thy compassionate countenance, and we shall be safe.*

Oh mistress of all things, saint of saints, our strength and refuge, God, as it were, of the world, glory of heaven, accept those who love thee; hear us, for thy Son honors thee and denies thee nothing..—*Ibid.*†

Come, hasten, oh Lady, and aid with thy mercy thy most sinful servant who invokes thee, and deliver him from the hands of the enemy.—*Ibid.*‡

Who will not sigh to thee? With love and grief we sigh. How, then, shall we not sigh to thee, oh solace of the miserable, refuge of outcasts, deliverer of captives? We are secure that if thou dost see our miseries, thy compassion will not be slow to relieve us.—*Ibid.*§

Oh our Lady and our advocate, recommend us to thy Son. Obtain, oh blessed one, by the grace thou hast merited, that he who did condescend with thy mediation, to become a participator of our infirmity and misery, may also by thy intercession make us to share in his blessedness and glory.—*Ibid.*‖

In thee I have placed the hope of my whole heart.—*St. John Damascene.*

It is not possible, oh Lady, that thou shouldst

* S. Bern. aut quisq. est auctor sup. Salv. Reg. Serm. 2.
† Loc. cit. Serm. 3. ‡ In Salv. Reg. S. Bon. Stim. c. 12, p. 3.
§ Loc. cit. ‖ Sup. Salv. Reg.

abandon him who places his hope in thee.—*St. Bernard.*

If thou dost only wish for our salvation, it will be impossible that we should not be saved.—*St. Anselm.*

Hail, daughter of God the Father; hail, mother of God the Son; hail, spouse of God the Holy Ghost, hail, temple of the holy Trinity.—*Simon Garcia.*

Oh Virgin, how beautiful art thou!

Mother of my God, my heart is enamored with thy goodness.

Thanks be to God and to Mary.

May all things be to the eternal glory of the most holy Trinity, and of the immaculate Mary.

Live always, Jesus our love and Mary our hope, with Joseph and Theresa our advocates

---

ACCLAMATIONS IN PRAISE OF MARY.

Oh most holy Virgin Mary! oh queen of angels! how complete and perfect heaven has created thee! Oh, that I might appear in the eyes of God, as thou dost appear to me! Thou art so beautiful and lovely, that with thy beauty thou dost ravish hearts. When thou dost appear, every thing appears deformed, every beauty is eclipsed, every grace disappears, precisely as the stars disappear at the rising of the sun.

Thy great servant, St. John Damascene, contemplated thee; and when he saw thee so lovely,

it appeared to him thou hadst taken the flower and the best of every creature, and therefore he called thee: The comeliness of nature: "Naturæ venustatem;" the grace and comeliness of all creatures. St. Augustine, the brightest light of the Doctors, gazed on thee, and thou didst appear to him so beautiful and lovely, that he called thee the form and countenance of God, and it did not seem to him adulation: Thou art worthy of being called the form of God: "Si formam Dei te appellem digna existis." Thy devout servant, Albertus Magnus, contemplated thee, and it seemed to him that all the graces and gifts that were found in the most celebrated women of the ancient dispensation were all surpassed in thee. The golden mouth of Sara, when with thy smile thou makest heaven and earth joyful; the tender and sweet glance of the fruitful Lia, with which thou dost soften the heart of God inexorable to sinners; the splendor of the countenance of the beautiful Rachel, as thou dost obscure the sun by thy radiant beauty; the grace and the comeliness of the discreet Abigail, with which thou dost appease the wrath of an angry God; the fire and strength of the brave Judith, when thou dost powerfully and graciously subdue the proudest hearts.

In a word, sovereign princess, from the vast ocean of thy beauty flowed forth, like streams, the beauty and grace of all creatures. The sea learned to curl its waves, and wave its crystals, from the golden locks of thy head, which, curling gracefully, floated upon thy shoulders and

ivory neck. The crystal fountains, and their clear depths, learned their quiet and steady flow from the serenity of thy beautiful brow and thy placid countenance. The graceful bow, when it is most beautiful, has carefully learned from thy eyebrow to arch itself gracefully, that it may better dart forth its rays of light. The morning Dian and the gentle Hesperus are flashes from thy radiant eyes. The white lily and the ruddy rose have stolen their colors from thy cheeks. The envious purple and coral sigh for the ruby of thy lips. The purest milk and sweetest honey are distillations from the sweet honeycomb of thy mouth. The odorous jasmin and the fragrant rose of Damascus have stolen their perfumes from thy breath. The loftiest cedar and the finest and most erect cypress esteem themselves happy when they see that they are the image of thy straight and lofty neck, and the palm-tree enviously, and in emulation, imitates thy stately stature. And thus, oh Lady, every created beauty is the shadow and copy of thy beauty. Therefore I do not wonder, oh sovereign princess, that heaven and earth are placed under thy feet; for they are so small and thou so great, that when thy feet only rest upon them they are enriched, and they deem themselves happy and blessed when they can kiss them: so the moon when St. John the Evangelist saw her at thy feet. And the splendor of the sun was increased, when thou didst clothe thyself with his rays. The Evangelist, blinded by the greatness of thy light,

was lost in wonder, and beside himself at the sight of so stupendous a miracle of beauty, in which the beauty of heaven and earth was contained, and he said: And there appeared a great sign in heaven: "Signum magnum apparuit in cœlo." There appeared a great wonder in heaven, that amazed the angels and terrified the earth. And that miracle was a woman clothed from head to foot with light and splendor, whom the resplendent sun chose for his mother, and he placed himself in her womb, and to her the fair moon serves as a robe encircled with silver, and innumerable stars crown her temples, and are emulous of encircling her locks, and adorn her head with a wreath of precious gems: And on her head a crown of twelve stars; "Et in capite ejus corona duodecim stellarum."

And thus the saints, oh most sacred Virgin, marvelling at so great splendor which surpasses the brightness of the sun, and the graceful loveliness of the moon, though they be the perfect flower and ideal of all beauty, and considering the acclamations that burst forth from the heavens, never ceased to admire thy beauty, and do nothing but exclaim, and extol thee also, with acclamations of wonder and amazement. St. Peter Damian, paying to thee his homage, says: "Oh holy, and most holy of all the saints, and the richest treasure of all sanctity!" And St. Bernard: "Oh admirable Virgin! Oh woman, the glory of all other women! The best and greatest that the world has ever possessed!"

St. Epiphanius : "Oh heaven more vast and extended than the empyrean ! Virgin truly full of grace !" And the Catholic Church, in the name of all, sings : "Oh most clement, most merciful, oh always sweet Virgin Mary !"

And I also, oh heavenly princess, with thy leave, although I am the least of thy servants, I also wish to make my acclamations of wonder and amazement. Oh gracious and beautiful heaven, more vast than the empyrean! since in this the immensity of God is not contained, but he was even concealed in thy womb. Oh richest treasure, in which was deposited the most rich jewel of our redemption! Oh mother of sinners, beneath thy mantle we are protected! Oh consolation of the world, in whom all the afflicted, infirm, and disconsolate find comfort! Oh beautiful eyes, that ravish hearts! Oh coral lips, that take souls captive! Oh beneficent hands, filled with hyacinths, that are always dispensing graces. Oh pure creature, who dost appear so like God, and whom I should have esteemed God, if faith had not taught me that thou art not God, although thou hast a splendor and I know not what of supreme Deity! Oh great Lady, empress of heaven, enjoy for a thousand eternities the grandeur of thy state, the immensity of thy graces, and the felicity of thy glory. Only I supplicate thee, oh compassionate mother, that thou wilt not forget us, who beg to be thy servants and children. And because thou art the depositary of all graces, and the best and most privileged of all created things, obtain for us thy

servants, oh Lady, that we may be favored far more than any others in the world. And may all the world know that the dear children of Mary are the best of heaven and earth; the beloved children who are tenderly cared for, and enjoy the best that such a mother has to give; the well-beloved, who are caressed in the bosom of the queen of heaven, and are doubly favored and doubly caressed by thy majesty. Thus I hope, oh most beautiful Rachel! and thus I trust thou wilt do, oh sovereign princess! In the name of what thou art; do it, for all heaven prostrate at thy feet, is supplicating and praying thee for this. Consent; utter but one loving *fiat*; *fiat*; *fiat;* be it done, be it done. Oh man, what art thou doing? How dost thou love the creatures of the earth, deceitful and lying creatures, who betray and make thee lose thy soul, and body, paradise, and God? And why not love Mary, the most loving, the most amiable, and the most faithful, who, after enriching thee with consolations and graces in this life, will obtain for thee, from her divine Son, the eternal glory of paradise? Oh Mary, Mary, beautiful above all creatures! lovely, next to Jesus, above all loves! dearer than all created things! more graceful than all graces! have pity on my miserable heart. Miserable because it ought to love thee and does not love thee. Thou canst kindle it with thy holy love. Turn, oh Mary, thy loving eyes upon me, look upon me, draw me to thyself, and obtain that, next to God, I may love none but thee, oh most gracious, most amiable Mary, mother of Jesus, and my mother.

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